

# CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY



The Posture of the Interpreter  
MARTIN H. FRANZMANN

The Theological Implications of Confirmation  
ARTHUR C. REPP

Prolegomena According to Karl Barth  
ROBERT D. PREUS

Homiletics

Theological Observer

Book Review

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## Word—Knowledge—Practice

Exegetical, systematic, and practical theology, all historically considered, are the disciplines in which our articles move this month.

March is the time of spring's awakening. The fresh approach in our lead article can help bring about a springtide of interest and practice in thorough and always obedient Biblical interpretation among our readers. What will more surely produce in the church that life which Christ has promised, than pastoral, professorial, and congregational reimmersion in the stream of living water flowing ever anew from the Incarnate Word in the written Word?

In the opinion of many, a thorough understanding of the nature and purpose of prolegomena as the purposeful outline and foundation of dogmatics is indispensable for the alert and serious theologian. The study offered on Prolegomena in the church dogmatics of a most influential contemporary Protestant theologian makes us more appreciative of values found in Chris-

tian groups and traditions other than our own. Such a study indicates as well that sifting and choice are required of all who read modern theological publications. We take gold wherever we find it and appreciate help in sorting out dross.

In practice there is not unknown among us today the wholesome custom of reviewing everything we do for which there may not be explicit dominical directives. Such a second look is taken in the material on confirmation, instruction, and first Communion. In the spring of the year, when catechetical classes are nearing a climax, pastoral care will be deepened by a study of the history and practice of what some consider to be almost a second Baptism and others hold to be almost without value.

In the name and service of the Lord of suffering and death and life, whose church we teach, whose people we help pasture, the editorial staff wishes all readers a blessed and hallowed remembrance of the Passion of Christ.

St. Louis, Mo. GILBERT A. THIELE

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# The Posture of the Interpreter

By MARTIN H. FRANZMANN

EDITORIAL NOTE: This paper was read to an international conference of Lutheran theologians which met at Concordia College, Oakland, Calif., in June 1959. The general theme of the conference was: "Our Fellowship Under Scripture."

PRACTICALLY everybody in Christendom claims to be in some sense under Scripture. The Liberal feels that he is being "true to the deepest intentions" of Jesus or of Paul when he treats Scripture in his own fashion. Bultmann claims to be dealing so radically with the form of the New Testament message merely in order to confront modern man with what he considers the essential content of the New Testament message. And certainly the Fundamentalist, for all his frequent failure to make the most basic and radical distinction that the Bible itself knows, the distinction between Law and Gospel, interprets his Bible in the conviction that he is putting himself under Scripture.

The matter is obviously not a simple one. How can the interpreter in the church assure himself and the church that he is really working in obedience to the inscripturated Word of God? Von Hofmann has pointed out<sup>1</sup> that in the history of interpretation most of the aberrations from sound exegesis stemmed not from ignorance of proper hermeneutical principles but from a false attitude toward Scripture which led men to believe that these principles could not or did not need to be applied to it.

<sup>1</sup> J. Chr. K. von Hofmann, *Biblische Hermeneutik* (Nördlingen: C. H. Beck'sche Buchhandlung, 1880), pp. 24 ff.

The way toward being under Scripture begins, then, not with an examination of exegetical techniques but with a consideration of exegetical attitude. This paper, therefore, purposes to inquire not into the skills of interpretation but into the basic attitude of the interpreter of Scripture, the attitude which will dictate how skills are to be employed and techniques are to be applied. For this the term "posture" has been employed. As a workman's posture is imposed upon him by the nature of his materials and the nature of his work, so the interpreter's posture is dictated by the nature of Sacred Scripture and by his function as interpreter of Sacred Scripture.

The culmination of God's revelation is the incarnation, and the incarnation is the interpretive center of all divine revelation. Our point of contact with the incarnation is the apostolate, and our present point of contact with the apostolate is the apostolic Word of the New Testament. We may, therefore, describe the function of the interpreter in terms of that *mimesis*<sup>2</sup> of the apostle (and of the apostle's Lord) which Paul requires of the church. (2 Thess. 3: 6-12; Phil. 3:17; 1 Cor. 4:14-17; 1 Cor. 11:1; 1 Thess. 1:6-8)

<sup>2</sup> Since the English word "imitation" does not fully convey the meaning of the Greek word it literally reproduces, the Greek word *mimesis* is used throughout this discussion. Only a select number of passages involving the idea of *mimesis* will be treated here; for a full treatment of the New Testament word group see Wilhelm Michaelis' article in *Tb. W.* IV, 661-678, to which I am indebted in the following section.

## "Mimesis" and Interpretation

In all five of the passages cited above *mimesis* involves interpretation, that is, an inner appropriation of the apostle's Word. In 2 Thess. 3:6-12 the church is called upon to understand and to translate into appropriate action the commandments of the apostle (vv. 6, 10) and to comprehend and to act in accordance with the tradition which it has received from him (v. 6), a tradition which his own conduct among them has exemplified (vv. 8, 9). On the basis of this interpretation of his words the members of the church are to become "imitators" of him. Likewise in Phil. 3:17 the *mimesis* to which the Philippians are summoned is no blind following in Paul's footsteps; it involves an inner appropriation of the apostolic word in which he proclaims the nature of a genuinely Christian life (3:4-14) over against the aberrations and distortions of both legalist (3:2-5) and libertine (3:18, 19). When Paul appeals to the Corinthians to imitate him by turning from the intoxication of a theology of glory to the sobriety and suffering of a theology of the cross (1 Cor. 4:14-17), he is asking them to understand and to appropriate his words to them; he is asking them to interpret afresh the Gospel, by which he begot them (v. 15), to understand and heed the admonition which he is writing to them (v. 16), and to give ear to the reminder of his teaching (his "ways in Christ Jesus") which Timothy will bring to them. (V. 16)

In 1 Cor. 11:1 Paul concludes his long discourse (chs. 8-10) on the consideration which Christians owe to a weak brother's conscience with the appeal, "Become *imitators* of me." The *mimesis* which he calls

for obviously involves the understanding and the appropriating of all that he has said in the preceding three chapters. In the *mimesis* spoken of in 1 Thess. 1:6-8 the interpretive act is particularly prominent. The Thessalonians became imitators of Paul and of the Lord in "accepting" the Word, and this "accepting" is an inner appropriation and assimilation of the Word. As Grundmann points out, δέχεσθαι is a way of describing the act of faith.<sup>3</sup> So thoroughly did they appropriate the apostolic Word that they could transmit it faithfully; the Word that sounded forth from them was nothing less than "the Word of the Lord." (V. 8)

*Mimesis* is broader than what we commonly call interpretation. Any act of faith, done in believing obedience to the apostle and the apostle's Lord, may be called *mimesis*. But since each such act is *mimesis* by virtue of the fact that the apostolic Word is inwardly appropriated, every such act involves interpretation. And the interpretation of the apostolic Word is already a part of the *mimesis*, not merely a preparation for it. Or to put it differently, all *mimesis* is a being caught up into the apostolic impetus of a life lived under the Lordship of Jesus Christ; the means and dynamic of this "being caught up" is the believing apprehension of the apostolic Word. *Mimesis* is therefore, it would seem, a natural and suitable term for the task of the interpreter, and a consideration of this *mimesis* holds promise of being helpful in determining what the posture of the interpreter should be.

<sup>3</sup> "... eine Umschreibung des Glaubensbegriffes," *Tb. W.* II, 53.

This act of *mimesis* includes two elements: (a) the recognition of apostolic authority and submission to it; and (b) the continuation of the apostolic task. When Paul speaks to the Thessalonians regarding the idle and disorderly enthusiasts among them, his words are markedly authoritative (2 Thess. 3:6-12). He asserts his authority even when pointing to his refusal to exploit that authority for his own advantage (v. 9). He recalls the "tradition" which the Thessalonian church had received from him (v. 6), and "tradition" is for Paul, the former rabbinical student, an authoritarian conception.<sup>4</sup> He gives commands (vv. 6, 10, 12), and he prescribes a penalty for disobedience to his instructions (2 Thess. 3:14, 15). *Mimesis* is submission to apostolic authority, and it includes the continuation of the apostolic task, the carrying on of the apostolic impetus. The conduct of the idle and disorderly is to be shaped by the apostolic example as interpreted by the apostolic Word, and the church gets its norms for dealing with the disorderly from the apostolic Word.

In Phil. 3:17 Paul is pitting his authority against that of Judaizers (Phil. 3:2) and that of the "enemies of the cross of Christ" (Phil. 3:18, 19). Of these two groups the Judaizers certainly claimed authority over the church, and the same may be said of the "enemies of the cross" also, especially if we follow Schlatter's very plausible suggestion<sup>5</sup> that Paul is referring to the arrogantly authoritarian pneumatics of Corinth. Paul centers his authority, as always, wholly in Christ (Phil. 3:7-14). The second ele-

ment in the *mimesis*, the continuation of the apostolic task, appears with peculiar clarity here. The Philippians are being called upon to "walk" as the apostle walks (Phil. 3:17), to "stand" where he stands (Phil. 4:1). But beyond that Paul points not only to himself but also to other men who "walk thus" and are therefore objects of *mimesis*. The apostle has initiated a rhythm which continues and is to be continued: believing and obedient men, through their *mimesis* of the apostle, have become, in turn, objects of the *mimesis* of the church.

In 1 Cor. 4:14-17 Paul calls himself the father of the Corinthian Christians as one who has begotten them in Christ Jesus through the Gospel. The father is a figure of authority. And Timothy is being sent to Corinth to remind the Corinthian church of Paul's "ways in Christ," the teaching which is authoritative and shapes the life of all the churches. The father-children figure also implies the other element in *mimesis*, the continuation of the apostolic task; the child not only owes its origin to the father, the child lives with the father in a communion of will and activity.<sup>6</sup> Paul's Corinthian children are being summoned to live and work under the cross, with its nay to human wisdom and pride, as their father Paul lives and works under the cross.

In 1 Cor. 11:1 and 1 Thess. 1:6 the element of authority in *mimesis* is especially strong, for here Paul bases the *mimesis* which he asks of the church on his own *mimesis* of Christ; and it is clear that Paul does not "imitate" or "emulate" Christ—

<sup>4</sup> See Büchsel, *Tb. W.* II, 175.

<sup>5</sup> *Paulus der Bote Jesu* (Stuttgart: Calwer-vereinsbuchhandlung, 1939), p. 51.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Jesus' use of the father-child image, Matt. 5:44, 45.

he obeys Him as his Lord.<sup>7</sup> In both cases the second element, the continuation of the apostolic task, is also apparent. The Corinthian church is being called upon to become a genuinely "apostolic" and Christian church, a church bent on the salvation of men, not on religious self-fulfillment. The Thessalonian church has evinced itself as a genuinely "apostolic" church both by receiving the Word with joy and by transmitting it energetically.

The words denoting "imitation" are not very frequent in Paul or in the New Testament generally, but the thought occurs again and again. We shall confine ourselves to Paul and shall be selective even within that limitation. It is instructive to note what kind of imitation Paul does *not* want. He does not want men to attach themselves to his person; it is not his mission as apostle of Jesus Christ to create Paulinists (1 Cor. 1:12). Much as he values his peculiar gift of celibacy, he does not call for a blanket imitation of it. Rather he calls on each man to serve God with the *charisma* which God has given that man (1 Cor. 7:7). Paul does not expect the weak in faith to imitate his own strong faith. Rather he deprecates any attempt to force any such *mimesis* upon the weak in faith. (Rom. 14, 15; 1 Cor. 8)

Paul does expect the men of the church to become "fools" as he is a "fool" (1 Cor. 3:18, 19; 4:10, 16). He expects the church to pass judgment on the offending brother as he has already passed judgment (1 Cor. 5:3, 4, 13). He expects the men of the church to use their gifts, not for display

but for the edification of the whole church, as he, Paul, uses his gifts (1 Cor. 14:18-20). His confrontation with the risen Lord made a worker of Paul (1 Cor. 15:10); his apostolic proclamation of the risen Lord is to make the Christians of Corinth workers (1 Cor. 15:58).<sup>8</sup> He bids the church rejoice with his own apostolic Gospel-centered rejoicing (Phil. 2:17, 18). Under the apostolic Word the church of Corinth is to become so "apostolic" in dealing effectively with the misleaders of the church that the person of the apostle becomes, as it were, expendable; the apostle as person is to become ἀδόκιμος because the apostolic Word has created men in the likeness of the apostle. (2 Cor. 13)

The apostle speaks the authoritative word concerning the dead in Christ (1 Thess. 4:13-17), a word which is essentially a word of the Lord (v. 15); the church is expected not merely to receive that word in obedient recognition of apostolic authority—the word is to live and work on from mouth to mouth, from man to man (1 Thess. 4:13-17). The apostolic word concerning the times and seasons of the Lord's return (1 Thess. 5:1-10) is to continue *per mutuum colloquium et consolationem fratrum* (1 Thess. 5:11). In the Letter to the Colossians this *mimesis* is spelled out word for word: The apostle *proclaims Christ, admonishing and teaching every man in all wisdom* (Col. 1:27, 28); in the edifying converse of the church the *Word of Christ* is to dwell richly; in word and song the brethren are to *teach and admonish* one another in *all wisdom* (Col. 3:16). It can hardly be accidental that Paul speaks of himself as *called* apostle and

<sup>7</sup> Eph. 5:1 drastically points up the element of submission to authority in *mimesis*; here the churches are called upon to "imitate" God Himself.

<sup>8</sup> Note the verbal echo, ἐκποίησα (v. 10), νότος (v. 58).

of the church as *called* saints in just two letters, the Letter to the Romans and the First Letter to the Corinthians (Rom. 1: 1,7; 1 Cor. 1:1,2). In both these letters the summons to *mimesis* is very pronounced. The Roman saints are to be caught up in the apostolic missionary impetus under the power of the Gospel, which the apostle proclaims; the saints of Corinth are to be caught up in the apostolic impetus of a life lived wholly to the Crucified, with all the abnegation of human pride and self-assertion which such a life involves.

*Mimesis* of the apostle, in the New Testament sense, involves both the obedient recognition of apostolic authority on the part of those who are interpreting the apostolic Word and the will to continue the apostolic task under the power of the apostolic Word. Any interpretation of the apostolic Word in the apostolic church will therefore have to be determined by these twin impulses if it is to be legitimate interpretation, that is, if it would claim to interpret the apostolic Word on its own terms.

#### I. THE *Mimesis* OF THE INTERPRETER AS RECOGNITION OF APOSTOLIC AUTHORITY

The interpreter's recognition of apostolic authority is, first, a recognition of the fact that the apostolate is the creation of the grace of God in Christ. This is spelled out unmistakably both in the history of the Twelve and in the history of Paul. The calling of the first four disciples, destined to be apostles (Matt. 4:18-22), is the first item under the rubric. "The kingdom of the heavens is at hand" (Matt. 4:17). "Kingdom of the heavens" is, by Jesus' own definition, pure grace: royal largesse

to beggars, comfort to mourners, the gift of God's new world to the meek who look with serene confidence to God, the free bestowal of righteousness upon men who hunger and thirst for it and must needs die without it (Matt. 5:3-6). The calling of Matthew the publican to discipleship and to the apostolate (Matt. 9:9) is so purely gracious that it is an offense to the "righteous" (Matt. 9:10-13). "Freely ye have received," Jesus tells the Twelve (Matt. 10:8). Paul cannot speak of his apostolate without speaking of the grace of God. His apostolate has its origin solely in that grace (Rom. 1:5; Gal. 1:13-16; Eph. 3:2-11) and is sustained by that grace. "By the grace of God I *am* what I am." (1 Cor. 15:9)

The absolute, divine character of this grace is seen in the fact that it comes to the apostles as to judged and doomed men. The Twelve came to Jesus with the Baptist's proclamation still ringing in their ears. They had heard him pronounce the threat of God's wrath upon the priestly nobility and upon the pietists of their people; they had heard the Baptist pronounce the doom of God's wrath upon man as man ("offspring of vipers"), a doom from which the mere fact of their descent from Abraham could not shield them (Matt. 3:9). Matthew describes the coming of the Kingdom in the person of Jesus as the light of God's new creation breaking upon a doomed and hopeless people "sitting in darkness . . . in the land and shadow of death" (Matt. 4:16). And the story of the Passion is the apostles' *confiteor*; they had all, by their flight and dereliction, denied the Christ before men and could in justice look for nothing but that the Christ would deny them before His Father (Matt. 10:33). It was absolute



and incredible grace that He should, instead, call them His disciples and His brethren and send them out to make disciples of all nations. (Matt. 28:7, 10, 19, 20)

For Paul, above all men, the apostolate was pure, incredible grace. He calls his coming into the apostolate a violent and unnatural birth, against nature (1 Cor. 15:8). He knew himself to be one of God's Onesimi, a runaway slave who deserved punishment, for he had persecuted the church of God (1 Cor. 15:9). For him, too, the call to the apostolate was the miracle of God's creative light shining, uncaused, out of darkness. (2 Cor. 4:6)

If the apostolate is the creation of God's grace in Christ, it is also the vehicle of that grace. "Freely give" is Jesus' word to the Twelve, who have received freely (Matt. 10:8). Paul becomes the Lord's chosen vessel to bear His name abroad, that only name by which men must be saved (Acts 9:15; cf. Gal. 1:15, 16). The authority of the apostle is therefore authority freely given, conferred authority, and it remains essentially Messianic authority. Jesus *makes* His disciples fishers of men (Matt. 4:19); He *gives* the Twelve authority (Matt. 10:1); He *gives* His apostle the keys of the Kingdom (Matt. 16:19). Thus their presence is the presence of the Christ of God; whosoever receives them receives the compassionate Shepherd of Israel and receives the God who sent Him (Matt. 10:40). Paul can boast only of the authority which the Lord has *given* him (2 Cor. 10:8); because authority has been *given* the apostle, the Christ speaks in him (2 Cor. 13:3) and works through him. (Rom. 15:18)

The apostles represent and present the Christ; in them and through them men are

confronted with the ultimate Word of God. No man can attain to that; it is the recreative grace of God that makes them vehicles of revelation. The Spirit is bestowed on them, and thus, and only thus, do they become mediators of divine revelation.<sup>9</sup> The interpreter, in recognizing apostolic authority, remains aware of this. In the apostolic writings he is dealing not with the works of religious geniuses who have achieved breath-taking religious insights, but with the words of doomed, forgiven, and inspired men, men in whose hearts the creative grace of God has shined to enable them to bring to the world the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.<sup>10</sup>

#### *The "Wunderbar"* *Character of the Apostolic Word*

The interpreter's recognition of apostolic authority is therefore a recognition of the "wunderbar" character of the apostolic Word, using the word "wunderbar" in the sense which Von Hofmann gave it in his *Biblische Hermeneutik*,<sup>11</sup> a sense not really adequately reproduced by "miraculous." One might describe it thus: "Wunderbar" describes that gracious intervention of God

<sup>9</sup> Since the gift of the Spirit will be further discussed below, a mere citation of some of the principal passages may suffice here: Luke 24: 48, 49; Acts 1:4, 8; 2; John 14:16, 17; 25, 26; 16:7-15; 20:21-23.

<sup>10</sup> The first four chapters of the First Letter to the Corinthians alone ought to have banished the term "religious genius" from our theological vocabulary.

<sup>11</sup> "Alles Geschehen und alles geschichtliches Erzeugnis, welches Verwirklichung des wesentlichen Willens Gottes ist, nennen wir wunderbar, weil in Widerstreit stehend mit der natürlichen Entwicklung des menschlichen Wesens, also alle Heilsgeschichte und deren Erzeugnis" (p. 35).



which transcends all the possibilities of human historical development and can therefore reverse the fatal cadence of fallen man's thinking, willing, and doing and can rescue man from fallen man's doom.

Proksch in his *Theologie des Alten Testaments* has correctly oriented a theological consideration of the miracle and the miraculous by subsuming the miracle under the larger theme of creation.<sup>12</sup> He associates the miracle in this context of creation not only with the creative act of God (אֱלֹהִים) but also with the Spirit and the Word of God.<sup>13</sup> We can take the full measure of what is meant by "wunderbar" only when we consider God the Creator of the world and the God who does wonders and the God whose Spirit is the decisively creative force in all that happens in all history and the God whose Word endures and does its appointed work when all flesh fails and dies. All these elements (creation, miracle, Spirit, Word) are present in the existence of the apostles of Jesus Christ and mark them and their words as "wunderbar."

The apostolate is a creation of God, and the apostolic Word mediates God's new creation. Jesus "made" the Twelve (Mark 3:14). Mark uses the same word for the appointment of the Twelve that the Sep-

tuagint uses in the first verse of Genesis. The risen Christ breathed upon them (John 20:22). John here uses the word that is used in Gen. 2:7 to describe the imparting of the breath of life to Adam. Paul likens his call to the apostolate to the *Fiat lux* of the first creation and knows himself to be not only the recipient but also the transmitter of that light. (2 Cor. 4:6)

God is the God who does wonders; His anointed King is the "wonderful" Counselor (Is. 9:5), and the incarnate Son is attested to men by mighty deeds and wonders and signs (Acts 2:22). The same nimbus of wondrousness is about the apostle; he does the wondrous deeds that are an enacted proclamation of the presence and power of the kingdom of God (Matt. 10:8). The Christ works through him "in the power of signs and wonders" (Rom. 15:18). God attests him with signs and wonders and manifold mighty deeds (Heb. 2:4). Where the apostle does his church-creating work, the signs of the apostle are wrought. (2 Cor. 12:12)

"Thou sendest forth Thy Spirit; they are created" (Ps. 104:30). The Spirit of God is present at the first creation, moving in creative energy over the waters (Gen. 1:2); the Spirit of God is in the people of God (Is. 63:10 ff.); the Spirit is upon the Messiah (Is. 11:1 ff.) and on the Servant of God (Is. 42:1; 61:1; Luke 4:16 ff.). And the Spirit is in the apostles. They have received the Spirit (John 20:21, 22; Acts 2:4) in fulfillment of the promises of their Lord (John 14:16, 17; 25, 26; 16:7-15; Acts 1:4, 8); and they bestow the Spirit (Acts 2:38; 8:15-17; 19:6; Gal. 3:2). Their ministry is a ministry of the Spirit. (2 Cor. 3:6, 8)

The Word of God is a wondrous power;

<sup>12</sup> *Theologie des Alten Testaments* (Guetersloh: C. Bertelsmann Verlag, 1950), pp. 474, 475.

<sup>13</sup> A fifth member of Proksch's creation complex, the wisdom of God, has not been utilized in this discussion, although it, too, could be documented in the New Testament proclamation of the Christ (Matt. 11:19; 1 Cor. 1:24, 30; Col. 2:3; Apoc. 5:12), in the words of the apostles (Luke 21:15; 1 Cor. 2:6, 7; Col. 1:28), and in the descriptions of the apostolic church (Acts 6:3, 10; 1 Cor. 12:8; Eph. 1:8, 17; 3:10; Col. 1:9; 3:16; 4:5; James 1:5; 3:13-18).

by it the heavens were made (Ps. 33:8,9); by it man lives (Deut. 8:3). It endures when all flesh withers as the grass and dies (Is. 40:6-8), and it surely carries out the purposes of God (Is. 55:10, 11). The Word of the apostles confronts men with the kingdom of God and spells "peace" or "judgment" according as men accept it or reject it (Matt. 10:7-15). The miracle of Pentecost, which sets them to work in Jerusalem and in the wide world, is a miracle of tongues, a gift of language from on high (Acts 2). Their word is henceforth the working Word of God (1 Thess. 2:13). Their Gospel is not a human production (Gal. 1:11) but the power of God Himself for the deliverance of men (Rom. 1:16), with all the inescapable energy of divine grace and divine judgment in it. (2 Cor. 2:15 f.)

All that asserts God's sovereign freedom in His relationship to the world and man (His unique creative power, His miracles, His Spirit, His Word), all these are present in the apostolate. The apostle is "wunderbar," an embodiment of God's wondrous and gracious countermovement against man's sin and doom. The apostle is not of this world; he is so different from the world that the world must needs hate him (John 17:14; 15:18, 19). It is with the apostles' Word, their wondrous Word, that the interpreter has to do.

For all their wondrousness the apostles have no halos; they appear in history in the form of the servant. The sending of the Twelve confronts men with the kingdom of God, which is transcendently "wunderbar." And yet Jesus sends them out as sheep in the midst of wolves (Matt. 10:16). As such—exposed and defenseless, going against the grain of the world,

as sure of incurring contradiction as was their Lord—as such they are the vehicles of the Kingdom (Matt. 10:7), the bringers of peace or judgment upon men (Matt. 10:13, 15); as such they speak a Spirit-wrought Word (Matt. 10:19, 20); as such they are the very presence of the Christ of God (Matt. 10:40). This servant's form conceals the wondrousness of the apostolate; but it also, and primarily, reveals it, for the divine strength is made perfect in their human weakness. What is now hidden in the lowliness of the apostolic mission shall with divine inevitability be revealed (Matt. 10:26). Therefore Paul "boasts" in his weakness and his sufferings, for he sees in them the power of the God who works by contraries (2 Cor. 1:9) and experiences in them the indwelling power of the Christ (2 Cor. 12:9, 10). Just because his apostolic Word is not a word made strong by the devices of human art, he knows that the power of God is in it (1 Cor. 2:3-5). Just because he knows his Word to be innocent of rhetoric, he knows that it is a potent Word, a Spirit-taught vehicle of revelation. (1 Cor. 2:10-13)

### *The Historical Character of the Apostolic Word*

God characteristically manifests Himself in history in the form of the servant. He chooses the least of all peoples as recipients and vehicles of His revelation. He is heard not in the earthquake but in the still small voice. The final coming of His kingdom is likened to the rolling of a "stone not made with hands," unimpressive in comparison with the fearful splendor of the great colossus that represents the kingdoms of this world. His anointed

King appears as a shoot from the stump of Jesse—he comes from the judged and ruined house of David—and does his work as the Servant-Messiah, and the apostles who speak His Word appear in history as the world's scrapings and rinsings. God enters, really enters, into the inglorious history of fallen man.

The essential counterpart to the recognition of the "wunderbar" character of the apostolic word is, therefore, the recognition of its historical character. The interpreter recognizes the historical uniqueness of the apostolate. The Christ appears with historical uniqueness at a certain time and place, born in Bethlehem under Augustus and dying in Jerusalem under Pontius Pilate. His apostles share in that historical uniqueness. They stand at a certain date on a mountain in the regions of Caesarea Philippi and confess Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ, the Son of the living God. That confession has about it the wondrousness of a divine act. It rests on what their fathers did not give them, what flesh and blood could not give them; it rests on the revelation of the Father in heaven. But this revelation is not a religious abstraction divorced from history; this revelation is given in history. The disciples confess Jesus as "the Son of the living God," as the living, reacting, acting Son of the living, reacting, and acting God; their confession has its root and basis in a history which they have witnessed. It has been given them to see in the words and deeds of the Servant-Messiah, in the contradicted Christ, who must endure the blasphemy of men, the inbreaking of the Kingdom of God.

The corollary to the recognition of the historical uniqueness of the apostolate is

the recognition of the witness character of the apostolic Word: "You shall be witnesses of Me" (Acts 1:8). The apostles are witnesses! They are witnesses to acts of God, to facts in history, and these acts and facts constitute the revelation of God. This comes out clearly in the words of Paul just when he is speaking of the most incredible fact of all, the crucially significant fact, the fact of the resurrection. If the fact is not fact, if God has not acted, there is no revelation. The apostolic proclamation is empty, and the faith of the church has lost its content and is vain (1 Cor. 15:14, 17). The apostles are no apostles but false witnesses against God if they attribute to God an act in history which He has not performed (1 Cor. 15:15). They are not harmlessly deluded men; they stand exposed as impious men and as blasphemers of God. The task of the interpreter is therefore not a search for a spiritual reality behind and beyond the historical reality communicated by the word of human witnesses, but the apprehension of the reality, witnessed and attested by men with eyes illumined by the Spirit in words taught by the Spirit, given in the historically conditioned Word in its witness to the historical mighty acts of God. Apostolic theology is essentially a theology of recital.

The interpreter therefore recognizes the historically conditioned human Word as the fit and adequate vehicle of divine revelation; the same condescending grace of God which enters human history also uses the plain human Word for the witness to, and the interpretation of, that entry into history (1 Cor. 2:1). That the human Word is the fit and adequate vehicle of God's revelation is seen most simply in the fact that men are responsible before it. It

saves them, or it dooms them, and the doom is their guilt. "Your blood be upon your heads" (Acts 18:6; cf. 20:26). The modern notion that any human word is necessarily a distortion of the divine revelation which it mediates is not shared by the apostles and prophets.

*The Interpenetration of the "Wunderbar" and the Historical*

The "wunderbar" countermovement of God, His gracious "nevertheless" over against the failure of man's history, is not a casual or intermittent intrusion into history but is woven into the texture of history, so that miracle and "naked history" interpenetrate. The uniquely creative act of God stands not only at the beginning of the world and of history, when God creates the world, life, and man (Gen. 1:1, 21, 27). It runs through history and calls into being His chosen people (Is. 43:1, 15), sons and daughters who are called by His name (Is. 43:7). The God who created heaven and earth creates the new age which dawns with the advent of the liberator of Israel, Cyrus (Is. 48:6, 7). He creates the clean heart (Ps. 51:12). His Messianic salvation breaks upon His people like a new first day (Is. 9:2; Matt. 4:16). The light of the new creation irradiates the heart of the apostle (2 Cor. 4:6), and the apostolic Word of reconciliation creates new men in Christ. (2 Cor. 5:17)

The miraculous, which only the omnipotence of God can produce, is not, in the Biblical view of it, confined to the miracles that stand out in high relief from the surface of normal history. God's intricate and hidden ways in guiding history are in themselves a miracle (Is. 28:29; 29:14), inaccessible to the probing mind of man.

God's anointed King, who is to sit on David's throne in history, is a Miracle-Counselor (Is. 9:5). The life of the incarnate Son of God bears a strangely double aspect; it is both the history of a first-century man who could be contradicted and destroyed and the Word of God made flesh, whose manifested Godhead men might see in faith (John 1:14; 12:37-40). The life of the apostles bear this same double aspect (2 Cor. 6:8-10); it is the defamed and contradicted apostle, the apostle who has been humiliated before the face of his church, who points to the miraculous "signs" which he has wrought in Corinth (2 Cor. 12:12); miracle and history are intermeshed and intertwined.

Likewise the wondrous operation of God's Spirit is not limited to primordial creation (Gen. 1:2) or eschatological renewal (Ezek. 36:26, 27; Is. 32:15). The Spirit works in history and through history, the history of a Joshua, a Gideon, or a Saul (Num. 27:18; John 6:34; 1 Sam. 11:6). The Spirit enters the arena where nation contends against nation and "competes" with the men and horses of Egypt (Is. 31:3). In the power of the Spirit the Messiah of the Lord and the servant of the Lord do their work in a real and human history (Is. 11:1-10; Is. 42:1). In the power of the Spirit Jesus of Nazareth enters Israel's history and deals with Israel's agony (Luke 4:14-21). The Spirit comes upon the apostles and the apostolic church and works there in a history open to the eyes of men. "This thing was not done in a corner," Paul tells Agrippa (Acts 26:26). The Spirit separates Paul and Barnabas for their mission to the Gentiles (Acts 13:2) and guides Paul and Silas through Asia to Troas (Acts 16:7). The

Spirit sets elders over the churches of Ephesus (Acts 20:28). And the Spirit binds inspired men to history. The apostles, filled with the Spirit, speak of the mighty deeds of God, speak of Jesus of Nazareth (Acts 2:11, 22); Stephen, full of the Spirit, recites the history of Israel (Acts 7:2-53, 55). According to John, the distinguishing mark of the Spirit of God is that He binds men to history; He confesses Jesus as the Christ "who has come in the flesh"—a theological flight from the Jesus of history is not the work of the Spirit of God. (1 John 4:1-3)

The word of God is the instrument by which the world was made (Ps. 33:6-9); and that Word runs through history, creatively and formatively making history. God's name, God's Law, God's promise, these make the history of Israel and determine the history of the nations. The anointed of the Lord and the Servant of the Lord carry out the Lord's purposes by the Word (Is. 11:4; Is. 50:4, 5, 10). The Messiah in history works by the Word. When He proclaims the great year of jubilee, that gracious year of God begins: "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your ears" (Luke 4:21). His Word remits the sin of man and restores the ruined body of man (Matt. 9:1-8). He drives out demons with a word (Matt. 8:16). He is, in the flesh, as man's human and humane high priest, the Word (John 1:14; Heb. 1:1). And if we would give the Acts of the Apostles a title which Luke himself would sanction, that title would have to be: "The Word of the Lord grew and prevailed" (Acts 6:7; 12:24; 19:20), for that is Luke's own caption over the story of how an obscure sect spread from Jerusalem to Rome.

In the apostolate, as in all the works of God, that which is numinously wonderful and that which is intelligible as "plain history" interpenetrate. The "wunderbar" in the Biblical record of God's revelatory words and deeds asserts God's freedom of creative determination at every point in history. "He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased" holds for every event in history. The interpreter as "imitator" of the apostle is therefore perpetually reminded by the immanent miraculousness of all that takes place under the sun that he must carry on his *mimesis* in the submission of faith, at every point, in the presence of the creatively active power of God, who calls the things that are not into being. On the other hand, the down-to-earth historical character of the mighty deeds of God serves as a perpetual reminder that his faith is not a vague and mystical absorption into the Godhead or an ecstatic intercourse with noble religious ideas but is, rather, relatedness to the concrete, historical redemptive action of God.

The interpreter is not critic; there is no legitimate technique of historical-theological inquiry (and the interpreter of Sacred Scripture is always both historian and theologian) by means of which the interpreter can separate the miraculous from the historical or can penetrate beyond the "wunderbar" into naked history without emptying this history of that which gives it significance. There is no place where the interpreter can stand (if he is acting in *mimesis* of the apostle) and exert critical leverage. The interpreter is aware of the fact that what is involved here is not the *Weltbild* or *Weltanschauung* of the men of the Bible but the theology of the Bible. The question is: Is God shut out from

history, or is He in it, really in it, and free to reveal Himself in it? Is He the First and the Last, or did some nameless prophet merely conceive of Him as First and Last? Is He Lord of history or captive to laws of history? Is He both Creator and Redeemer? Is His grace an absolute grace, sovereignly invading the life of man and the world's history, or is it, after all, in some sort dependent on man? Or to put the question in another form: How seriously do we take the incarnation?<sup>14</sup>

*"Mimesis" and the Authority of the Old Testament*

Since the apostolic witness is witness to a history interpreted by the Old Testament, *mimesis* as recognition of apostolic authority necessarily involves a recognition of the Old Testament as the authoritative Word of God. The interpreter sees the Old Testament in apostolic perspective,

<sup>14</sup> L. S. Thornton, in his *Revelation and the Modern World* (Westminster: Dacre Press, 1950), p. 16, arrives by quite a different route at a conclusion very similar to the one stated above. He deprecates "any attempt to distinguish the essence of revelation from the sacred literature in which it is enshrined." All such attempts, he says, "involve us in a process of discrimination by which we sit in judgment upon Scripture. . . . It is for the Creator to decide in what manner He will reveal Himself; and God being what He is, the manner of revelation is not a matter upon which man can safely form decisions. . . ."

Ernst Fuchs has called the historical-critical method "die moderne Variante des Traditionsprinzips der altkirchlichen, bzw. mittelalterlichen Bibelauslegung." As the tradition in practice outweighed the authority of Scripture, "so ordnete die historisch-kritische Bibelauslegung die Bibel der Geschichte unter und nahm der Schrift damit das Prädikat ihrer Weltüberlegenheit, die Heiligkeit" (*Hermeneutik* [Bad Canstatt: R. Muellerschoen Verlag, 1958], pp. 159, 160).

that is, from the vantage point of its fulfillment in Jesus. He thus recognizes the continuity and unity of God's speaking in both Testaments, its essential Christocentricity.

This is a large topic, involving a host of problems which cannot be dealt with here. But this much may and must be said: The apostles (and the apostles' Lord), both by their use of the Old Testament and by their explicit utterances concerning it, make it plain where the interpreter whose work is a *mimesis* of the apostles must stand over against the Old Testament Scriptures. Both Jesus and His apostles perceive in this book the voice and will of the God who has in the last days spoken in a Son. Jesus is consciously the Fulfiller of the ancient Word of God, and the apostolic witness to the Christ is unequivocally a witness "according to the Scriptures." Both Jesus and His apostle make it clear also that they are not simply equating the Old Testament with the New Testament Word. The voice of Jesus is not merely another prophetic voice; His is the voice of the Son, who for the last time calls upon God's people to give God what is God's—and dies in delivering that summons (Matt. 21:33-40). Paul says of the Old Testament that it has power to make a man wise unto salvation "*through faith in Christ Jesus*" (1 Tim. 3:15). The Old Testament has its limitation and its abiding validity as Promise, as revelation of the Covenant God in His motion toward the incarnate Christ.

The continuity and unity of God's speaking in both Testaments is for the apostles a given certainty. If modern Old Testament exegesis has rarefied the nexus between the Testaments to the point where



it bears only a shadowy resemblance to that massive and living connection posited by the apostles; if it has made dubious and problematical what is for the apostles certain and axiomatic, the methodological question inevitably arises: If modern methodology in Old Testament exegesis has brought men to the point where they can no longer "imitate" the apostles, may it not be that we are in the last stages of a grandiose aberration, comparable to the age-long domination of the fourfold sense in patristic and medieval exegesis?

Whatever one may think of Wilhelm Vischer's attempt to interpret the Old Testament "Messianologically" with resolute consistency,<sup>15</sup> he has raised the question of the nexus between the Testaments in a pointed and not-to-be-evaded way.<sup>16</sup> And it can hardly be said that the challenge of Von Hofmann (that we follow the apostolic interpretation of the Old Testament with a real sympathy for what is essentially characteristic of it and derive our herme-

neutics for Old Testament interpretation from it)<sup>17</sup> has yet been really met.

### *The Diaconic Character of "Mimesis"*

*Mimesis*, as a recognition of apostolic authority, involves a recognition of the diaconic character of all apostolic speaking. The *genus proximum* in the definition of the work of the interpreter of the Bible is therefore not some branch of scholarship, some form of *Wissenschaft*, but ministry. Jesus put the imprint of ministry upon the apostolate once for all when He described His own Messianic mission as ministry (Matt. 20:25-28), and the apostles in turn put that same diaconic imprint upon the apostolic church.<sup>18</sup> A life of ministry is, as Jesus' word indicates, abnormal for man as man; it goes against the grain of our manhood. The life of the interpreter is therefore a life of repentance, a radical aversion from self and denial of self. It is a life in Christ, a life of faith in Him who loved us and gave Himself for us in a ministry carried out to the utmost. It is a life in the Spirit, who is given for ministry (1 Cor. 12). In a word, it is a life in the church which is upbuilding itself in love.

Ministry is personal; it is a giving of *oneself* to others. One may expect of the interpreter therefore that he submit himself wholly to the Word, with which he

<sup>15</sup> *Das Christuszeugnis des Alten Testaments*, I (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1935).

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32: "Eine Kirche, die den Wert des alttestamentlichen Zeugnisses gegenüber dem neutestamentlichen herabsetzt, glaubt den Aposteln gerade das Entscheidende ihrer Botschaft nicht und hört auf, 'christlich' zu sein. Denn das Entscheidende der apostolischen Verkündigung ist nun einmal, Jesus sei der Christus des Alten Testaments." Pp. 33, 34: "... der Christus Jesus des Neuen Testaments steht tatsächlich im Fluchtpunkt der alttestamentlichen Perspektive. Nun scheint aber die moderne Bibelwissenschaft eindeutig und endgültig das Gegenteil bewiesen zu haben. ... Die Frage ist jedoch, ob nicht die Methoden und Ergebnisse dieser Forschung begründete Zweifel gegen sich erwecken. Steht nicht diese moderne Forschung, mehr als bei der Auslegung alter Texte erlaubt ist, im Banne einer modernen Wissenschaftslehre? Trägt sie nicht fremde Gesichtspunkte ein?" Cf. also pp. 35, 36.

<sup>17</sup> P. 11: "... Unsere Schriftwissenschaft, soweit sie das Alte Testament betrifft, hat keine höhere Aufgabe als die, zu einer wissenschaftlich begründeten Methode der Schriftauslegung zu gelangen, vermöge deren wir mit Bewusstsein und unter Aufzeigung der von den Aposteln unausgesprochenen Vermittlung ebenso auslegen, wie die Apostel ausgelegt haben, welche es unvermittelterweise thaten."

<sup>18</sup> E.g., Eph. 4:12; 1 Peter 4:10, 11; 1 Cor. 16:15; Heb. 6:10.

deals. One may not expect of the interpreter an impersonal and iron objectivity or a gray neutrality over against his materials and over against those whom he serves. His heart must needs burn within him. While ministry is personal in this sense, it is also selfless. No professional vanity, no passion for professional acceptance, no striving for "intellectual respectability," keeps the interpreter from going his diaconic way; he is ready to risk contempt and endure professional obscurity for the sake of ministry to the church.

Ministry is toil and labor (2 Cor. 6:3-5; 11:28, 29). To conceive of interpretation as being, first and foremost, a ministry is not to enter a plea for what has been called holy shortcuts in interpretation. Ministry is the motivation for the severest kind of scholarly discipline. Interpretation gets its scholarly character from its diaconic nature; it is scholarly and "scientific" just because it fulfills its diaconic function wholeheartedly and scrupulously according to the norms dictated by its materials. However, the Pastoral Letters constantly remind the interpreter that he need not and cannot consider it a part of his duty to dispute endlessly about every wrongheaded and wronghearted interpretation that demands to be heard in Christendom.<sup>19</sup>

If the interpreter is a minister, diaconic restatement of the Word he has heard, restatement in terms of here and now, is part of his task. The interpreter, of course, ministers in meekness and commits the success of the Word to Him who gave it. He will not seek to storm the citadel of the modern mind with weapons his Lord has not allowed him. Nor will he abridge or distort the apostolic Word in order to

conciliate prejudices which are rooted in man's proud rejection of God. But that aside, the apostolic message becomes, since it is received in faith, the interpreter's own. He is one with it and therefore speaks it to men in terms native to them and so seeks by all means to save some.<sup>20</sup>

## II. THE INTERPRETER'S *Mimesis* AS A CONTINUATION OF THE APOSTOLIC TASK

The task of the apostles is the fundamental and normative initiation of that rhythm of hearing and telling which is the history of the church.<sup>21</sup> The apostles receive the Word from their Lord in order that they may transmit it; their hearers receive the Word from them in order that the Word (still the Word of the Lord) may sound forth from them (1 Thess. 1:6-8). The risen Christ's outpouring of the Spirit upon the Twelve is the first beat of the New Testament music of the inspiration of all flesh (Acts 2:17, 33). The Good Shepherd (John 10:11), who remains always the Chief Shepherd (1 Peter 5:4), makes the apostle the shepherd over His sheep and lambs (John 21:16, 17). This shepherd-rhythm continues in the church which the apostolic Word calls into being. In it the elders are shepherds over the flock of God (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-4; Eph. 4:11), and their tireless shepherd love seeks and saves the lost lives and works on in the whole church, where

<sup>20</sup> One might raise the question whether *διακονία* does not impose the duty to be brief; the compressed and pregnant eloquence of the New Testament is in striking contrast to the loquacity of its interpreters. Where is Bengel's laconic successor?

<sup>21</sup> I owe the image to Werner Elert, *Der Christliche Glaube*, 3d ed. (Hamburg: Furche-Verlag, 1956), p. 174.

<sup>19</sup> E. g., 2 Tim. 2:14 ff.



brother seeks and saves his brother. (Matt. 18:12-15; James 5:20)

The ministering Christ (Matt. 20:28) creates apostles who are ministers (2 Cor. 4:1; 6:3 f.; 11:8); their Word fits out the saints for their task of ministry (Eph. 4:12). Christ is Witness (John 18:37; Rev. 1:5; 1 Tim. 6:13); His apostles are witnesses; the apostolic church is a church of witnesses (Acts 22:20; Rev. 2:13; 6:9; etc.). Christ is the Light of the world (John 8:12; 12:46); through Him the apostles are the light of the world (Matt. 5:14; 2 Cor. 4:6); and the members of the apostolic church are shining luminaries in the world, as they hold fast the Word of life, which they have received (Phil. 2:15, 16). The Christ has the keys (Rev. 1:18); the apostle of Christ looses and binds (Matt. 16:19); the apostolic church looses and binds with divine authority (Matt. 18:18; 1 Cor. 5:2-5). The Christ is the Rock, the Foundation (1 Peter 5:4; 1 Cor. 3:10, 11); the bearers of His Word, apostle and prophet, are the foundation of the church (Eph. 2:20-22); on them the church rests, not as an inert mass but as living stones built into a growing temple. (1 Peter 5:5; Eph. 2:20-22)

The interpreter's task has its place in this rhythm of hearing and telling. The interpreter hears the apostolic Word and the Old Testament Word, which is the indispensable background and presupposition of the word of the apostles. He hears in the New Testamental sense of the word "hearing"—he hears and accepts in the pure passivity of faith and in the resolute and active reversal of repentance; his hearing is "the obedience of faith."<sup>22</sup> Such

hearing of necessity leads to telling; "We cannot but speak" is the inner dynamic of this perpetual rhythm in the church. The prodigal variety of verbs of telling in the New Testament<sup>23</sup> is an indication of the all-embracing character of the apostolic proclamation. The Word, which they proclaim, wholly claims the whole life of man in a graciously total confiscation. It indicates also how comprehensive the task of the interpreter as *mimesis* is. The interpreter's work of keeping the church in vital contact with the primary impulse of the apostolic Word may be roughly defined as a threefold one: it serves to maintain the genuinely apostolic rhythm for the edification of the church; it serves to extend that rhythm for the enlargement of the church; and it serves to correct that rhythm, where it falters or grows false, for the continual reformation of the church. The interpreter has need of grace, above all men in the church; his is the high privilege and the awesome responsibility of being pastor, missionary, and reformer all in one. And in all three of his functions there must be the characteristically apostolic strain of doxology.

The interpreter cannot shake off his fearful sense of responsibility; but he can take comfort in the fact that he is not alone. He "comprehends with all the saints." He has fathers who were before him and brothers who stand beside him. He can look back over the history of interpretation and find good guidance there, not least in the record of men's tragic aberrations in their hearing and telling of the Word. The fact that these aberrations more often than not stemmed from the

<sup>22</sup> Cf. G. Kittel in *Tb. W.* I, 220, 221.

<sup>23</sup> Friedrich lists 32 synonyms for "preaching," *Tb. W.* III, 701, 702.

unquestioned a *prioris* of the times should make him critical of the a *prioris* of his own time and should make him scrutinize his own with a wary eye. He can hear in the Confessions the voice of his fathers in the faith, to whom was given grace to hear again the primal apostolic and prophetic Word and to tell it with such assured clarity and force as to put all succeeding generations in their debt. He can acknowledge the debt and document his gratitude only in using these confessions as they themselves want to be used, as interpretations of the Word of God.<sup>24</sup>

The interpreter has brothers beside him. He serves them and is served by them. Since the interpreter's ministry is, of all the ministries in the church, characterized by the most immediate and intense preoccupation with the apostolic Word, which determines the whole life movement of the church, he is in a position to serve, challenge, and correct the systematician, the preacher, the catechist, the hymnodist, and the liturgist. But on the other hand, since his is the most "theoretic" of the ministries, he can and should be served, challenged, and corrected by those whose ministries are more directly diaconic and doxological in character, for each of these also functions as interpreter and is peculiarly conditioned for his work as interpreter by the

task he performs in the church. While the interpreter cannot compromise the apostolic witness in the interests of the supposed needs or a desiderated function of the contemporary church, the genuine needs of the church and the claims of the genuine function of the church can and should aid and guide him in his apprehension of the Word of God.

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What, then, is the posture of the interpreter? It is the posture of the obedient hearer and the overawed beholder. He hears the verdict of the righteous God of the Law without evasion or attempts at self-defense; he hears with all defenses down. He looks upon the God of grace as He reveals Himself in the face of His Son and says with Job: "Now mine eye seeth Thee; wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes." (Job 42:5,6)

If he abhors himself, he is set free for God, and his posture is the posture of adoration. His task of interpretation is a priestly ministration of the Word. He sees in the apostolate the vehicle by which God's last Word comes to him, the token and evidence of God's infinite condescension, a manifesting of God's impetus toward incarnation, and he glorifies the God who has given such authority to men.

His heart burns within him as he hears the Word, and he hastens to tell his brethren. The vision that overawes him also sets him to work; like Paul, he is not disobedient to the heavenly vision. His posture is the posture of ministry.

St. Louis, Mo.

<sup>24</sup> "Ein Bekenntnis steht nur insoweit in Geltung, als es die Funktion der Schriftauslegung ausüben vermag." G. Gloege, in *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 3d ed., Vol. I, Col. 997. More should be said on the place of confessions in the work of the Lutheran interpreters than the limitations of this paper permit.

# The Theological Implications of Confirmation

By ARTHUR C. REPP

EDITORIAL NOTE: This article which will appear in two installments represents a chapter of a book on Confirmation which is expected to be published in the near future.

THE Lutheran practice of confirmation can hardly be described as uniform during its long history. The differences varied greatly both in number and in kind as many accretions attached themselves to this practice. Because there was no Biblical basis for confirmation, the Lutheran Church did not hesitate to warrant new emphases and directions with changing circumstances and needs. As confirmation is practiced today, especially in the United States, it is cluttered with the remnants of such additions, the origins of which are rarely recognized. Just as the Reformation Church thought it was restoring confirmation in accord with the tradition of the early church, so many today regard their specific practice of confirmation as their heritage from the Reformation. This notion has given confirmation an aura which has largely prevented the consideration and acceptance of any major changes where necessary.

A study of confirmation as practiced within any given Lutheran congregation will likely reveal that many things are said and done which cannot be harmonized with the teachings of the Lutheran Church. Such differences have caused considerable confusion. They create some of the larger problems of which many pastors are aware and which have made an even larger number of laymen uneasy. It is therefore the

task of Lutherans in America, as it has been their task in Europe for some time, to restudy the practice of confirming baptized persons. Such a study should help eliminate accretions which do not meet present needs or which imply a contradiction of sound Lutheran doctrine. This will not be a simple task, because our confirmation tradition, though transplanted from Europe, has already become deeply rooted in the life of the church. Traditions are not easily disturbed, for as someone has put it, "it is easier to change a doctrine than a tradition."<sup>1</sup>

Yet if we are to get at the basis of some of the current problems in connection with confirmation, we must carefully evaluate our tradition and determine whether it is in harmony with Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions. If we are willing to make this study, we have already taken a long step toward a sound solution. If, on the other hand, we prefer first to tackle problems connected with the curriculum and methods or with a more effective administration, we shall continue to consume our efforts in attempting to eliminate mere surface symptoms. The heart of the confirmation problem is in the theological basis which must govern the objectives for confirmation.

Confirmation in the Lutheran Church is built on the means of grace. It is suspended

<sup>1</sup> Berthold von Schenk, "Confirmation and First Communion," *Una Sancta* (Pentecost 1957), p. 3.

between the sacramental poles of Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Confirmation is part of the nurturing of that faith which the Holy Spirit has created in Holy Baptism. Through instruction the church discloses to the catechumen the meaning and the continued significance of this sacrament. Confirmation furthermore prepares the child for a joyful and reverent participation in the Lord's Supper and a richer sharing of all that which life in the body of Christ implies. Such nurture and preparation is performed through instruction by the Word, the power of life to life.

# I

## HOLY BAPTISM

### *The Baptismal Covenant*

When the Christian Church in obedience to her Lord's command baptizes a child, she is privileged to perform a stupendous miracle in His name. In Holy Baptism God seizes the unwilling sinner and makes him His own. In this act the sin, together with the old man, dies an instant death. God creates in the infant the miracle of faith and gives him the new life. In Baptism the child is born anew and is clothed with the righteousness of Christ. God says, in effect, "You are My child, My own, through the merits of My Son."

Furthermore, in Baptism God makes a covenant with the infant. It is a unique covenant in every respect. It is unique not merely because the righteous and holy God makes an agreement with a sinner but because the agreement established is a covenant of *grace*. Covenants are usually bilateral, that is, one party agrees to something to which the second party makes a corresponding promise. Two partners,

as it were, each make an agreement. In the event that one breaks his promise, the covenant becomes null and void. If there are any damages to the innocent party, he may even have recourse to law. On the other hand, if it is agreeable to both parties, the covenant may be renewed. But not so with the baptismal covenant. It is unilateral. It is not conditioned by any act or promise of man. Natural man is impotent, yes, even unwilling to drive any kind of bargain with God or to establish a covenant. But in His mercy and love, God comes to man in his sin and with Baptism enters into a personal relationship. Therein He makes a promise of forgiveness, life, and salvation. Man merely accepts the promises and gifts of Baptism and thereby enters into the covenant relationship. Even this acceptance is the result of the regenerative work of the Holy Spirit.

The uniqueness of the baptismal covenant is heightened by the fact that it is continuous. God never breaks it. The covenant never ceases and needs no renewal. His promises are never withdrawn. "Our Baptism abides forever; and even though someone should fall from it and sin, nevertheless we always have access thereto, that we may again subdue the old man."<sup>2</sup>

True, man on his part can reject Baptism, he can refuse to believe, but this does not invalidate the covenant. Should he by the grace of God return to the covenant, he would not be renewing it. It was never made by him, nor can he break it, though he may lose his covenant relationship. When man returns, he places himself under God's covenant and again receives its precious benefits.

<sup>2</sup> The Large Catechism, Infant Baptism, par. 77.

Though Baptism has made man righteous in Christ, it is equally true that man is still sinful according to his own flesh. This creates the tension of the two natures of the Christian as summed up in Luther's well-known phrase *simul iustus et peccator*. The continuous combat of these two natures in the Christian is signified by Holy Baptism in the drowning of the old man and in the coming forth of the new man (Rom. 6:3-14). This significance of Baptism continues throughout life. Thus, while the sacrament is never repeated and the covenant cannot be renewed, its significance for the Christian is continuous. In that sense Baptism is not accomplished until death. The Small Catechism says of Baptism:

It signifies that the old Adam in us should, by daily contrition and repentance, be drowned and die with all sins and evil lusts and, again, a new man daily come forth and arise, who shall live before God in righteousness and purity forever.

Here the covenant idea is particularly helpful. In Baptism God renews us. There His Spirit has mortified our sinful nature and prepares us "for death and the resurrection in the Last Day." In addition, God gives us the desire for more and more of the new life, to remain in the covenant and to mortify sin more and more until the day we die. "God complies with this desire too, and disciplines you all your life with many good works and many kinds of suffering, whereby He fulfills what you have desired in Baptism."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Martin Luther, "A Sermon on the Holy Most Venerable Sacrament of Baptism," WA 2, 730, 23; SL X, 2118, 13. Translation taken from Regin Prenter, "Luther on Word and Sacrament" in *More About Luther* (Decorah, Iowa: Luther College Press, 1958), p. 93.

In commenting on this Prenter said:

These sentences must be carefully considered. They tell us a great deal about Luther's conception of Baptism. The covenant concluded between God and you in Baptism is a personal relationship. Therefore you are not receiving something magical, with which you can purify yourself according to your own wishes and ideals and thus obtain a righteousness of your own. On the contrary! You are being put under an obligation toward another person, in this instance the obligation by taking the right attitude toward your God. You must ask and pray for that which God intends to work in you: to mortify your flesh and to make you a new creature in the resurrection with Christ. . . . In concluding His covenant with us, God on His part has also accepted the consequences of such an unequal partnership. What are they? Luther answers: "Because this is your covenant with God, God on His part looks with grace upon you and promises that He will not impute the sins which remain in your nature after Baptism. He will neither regard them nor condemn you because of them; rather He is satisfied and pleased with the fact that you are constantly trying and desiring to mortify them and to be rid of them in your death."<sup>4</sup>

In the light of this, how can we justify speaking of a renewal of the baptismal covenant in confirmation? If it is not referring to the covenant of grace, is it being confused with the vow of the sponsors to renounce the devil and all his ways? If so, then a different terminology is needed. The renewal of the baptismal covenant was introduced into confirmation by the Pietists and their forerunners. They were interested

<sup>4</sup> Pp. 93 ff. The Luther citation is from WA 2, 731, 3; SL X 2118, 14.

in a pure congregation within the church, *ecclesiola in ecclesia*, and the renewal of the baptismal covenant was part of their conversion theology. Others, like Grossgebauer, believed that Baptism was incomplete and needed confirmation as a complement.<sup>5</sup> A renewal of the baptismal covenant tied the two together. Such ideas are Scripturally untenable and are unwarranted in a Lutheran confirmation.

At confirmation the young Christian gives merely his personal affirmation of the covenant which God made with him at the time of his Baptism and so reaffirms that he will live in it. This is part of his continuous concern. Until he dies he undertakes through Word and Sacrament to remain in the baptismal covenant and, in faith, to mortify his flesh. Such an affirmation is similar to the remembering of the covenant called for in several early Lutheran church orders before Pietism had effected a change in the confirmation practice.<sup>6</sup>

#### *Membership in the Church*

Since in Holy Baptism we have put on Christ (Gal. 3:27) and share in His death and resurrection (Rom. 6:3 f.), the

baptized person is a member of the body of Christ, His church (Eph. 4:3-6). Membership in this church is the only kind of membership spoken of in Scripture. Membership in a local congregation gets its meaning and validity in the sight of God only because it is derived from a membership in the holy Christian Church. Membership in the congregation is not a higher kind of membership, nor is it more real because we can see someone's signature on the books. The different types of membership which an organization may devise for the sake of order or for its own efficiency, such as baptized, communicant, and voting memberships, do not indicate third-, second-, and first-class members in the church of Christ, but are convenient tags to indicate various levels of rights or responsibilities which have been accepted by them. The term "full membership," used frequently at confirmation to indicate communicant membership, is a misnomer because it may imply that the privileges invested add something to or complete the membership given in Baptism. It is equally invalid when "full membership" is applied to voting membership, because it would, by the same token, imply that nonvoters have not as full a membership. If degree of responsibility is the criterion for "full membership," then not all the voters would be full members either. This would require the church to calibrate the scale of its membership even more precisely. God knows of no graduated scale for memberships. Baptism makes us members of the only church He knows, the body of Christ. (Rom. 12:4 f.)

When a child is baptized, it is baptized into a specific faith, usually expressed in some ancient baptismal confession, such as

<sup>5</sup> Theophil Grossgebauer, *Waechterstimme aus dem verwuesteten Zion sampt einem treuen Unterricht von der Wiedergeburt* (Frankfurt a/M: J. Wildens, 1661), pp. 71 f.

<sup>6</sup> Braunschweig-Wolfenbuettel CO, 1569 (Emil Sehling, *Die Evangelischen Kirchenordnungen des XVI. Jahrhunderts*, VI, 1, 165); Mansfeld Agende, 1580 (Sehling, II, 234); Lauenburg CO, 1585 (Johann Michael Reu, *Quellen zur Geschichte des kirchlichen Unterrichts in der evangelischen Kirche Deutschlands zwischen 1530 und 1600*, Guetersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1904—35, I, 3, 1, 563); Saxony CO, 1580 (Sehling, I, 425); Wittenberg Reformation, 1545, asks the children whether they intend to remain in their baptismal covenant (Sehling, I, 211).



the Apostles' Creed. Baptism is normally performed by a minister of Christ who has been called by a specific group of Christians assembled about the means of grace, who are the church in a given place. Even when a layman performs an emergency Baptism, he does this by virtue of his membership in the holy Christian Church. In such a case the child's newly created membership is normally inscribed in the records where Christians are assembled and recognize him as a fellow member. But such assembled Christians do not exist in a vacuum. They profess this membership in Christ through some confession of faith, more or less definitely defined, as they are assembled about the sustaining Word. They may call it Pilgrim Congregational, Christ Episcopal, St. Peter's Roman Catholic, the Lutheran Church of the Atonement, or by some other confessional name. Hence the baptized child's membership in the holy Christian Church is expressed and made more evident through the confession of the congregation which authorized or accepted his Baptism. By virtue of his Baptism a child becomes a member of the local congregation.

When a baptized child is led to believe that his membership in the Lutheran Church begins with his confirmation, a serious confusion is created. Even when in theory it is stated that while his membership began with Baptism, he is now making a public acknowledgment of that fact, we confuse the issue for him and the congregation in attendance. Why ask him at confirmation, "Do you desire to be a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church and of this congregation?" when he has already been a member all these

years? To say that we are projecting him back to the time of his Baptism leads to a serious misunderstanding, as evidenced by the church's literature. To speak of membership in connection with a child's confirmation is not only confusing, it exalts a man-made rite and detracts from the initiatory sacrament which God has established.

### *Confession of Faith*

At the time of Holy Baptism the sponsors confessed, in the child's stead, the faith which the Holy Spirit created by the water and the Word. The fact that the agenda may call for a confession of faith a moment before the actual sacrament is administered is immaterial. The entire rite is one act. We *know* that the Holy Spirit will work faith in the child. Whether we confess this faith before or after it is engendered is immaterial. More important than this is the fact that this confession of faith expresses the faith into which the church is embracing the child through his Baptism. Furthermore, the confession of faith of the sponsors is also made in the name and in the stead of the child. This confession is as valid as though the child made it himself. The acts of parents or appointed guardians in behalf of minors are always regarded as valid and binding. The child brought up in a Christian home soon learns to make a confession of faith with his own lips. At first it may be a simple "Abba, Father." As his understanding grows, his confession becomes a little more precise, consisting perhaps of the words of the Apostles' Creed. In fact, he makes many confessions of faith during his childhood. Every time he seeks forgiveness of sin he makes such confession. Every attendance at Sunday school or church is in a manner

of speaking a confession of faith. After he has been instructed, he is asked at confirmation to make a public confession through the examination and in the specific questions or the rite. A confession is further made at his first Communion, and by the grace of God he continues to confess throughout his life. The point is that the confession of faith at confirmation is only an episode in his life. It represents a stage in the development of his personal faith. It is in effect a progress report in the presence of the congregation and is an occasion for joy, thanksgiving, and prayer. Normally it is not a matter of "standing up and being counted," as some may wish to dramatize it. If in rare cases it happens to be that, then even in a more precise sense will this be true at his first Communion, wherein he identifies himself with the body of Christ and "shows forth the Lord's death."

Is this a confession of the faith to be believed, or is it a confession of the faith which the catechumen personally believes? This distinction has been discussed throughout the history of confirmation. It appears that the majority of Lutherans in the 16th century had a confession of the objective faith in mind, although this cannot be proved with certainty in every instance. In recent years Reu was one of the strongest proponents of this view. He feared that every effort to elicit a subjective confession was, or might become, an interference in the work of the Holy Spirit.<sup>7</sup> It is regrettable that his fears are often well founded. Nevertheless, because we know that a living, saving faith was created by Baptism

and normally was nurtured by the home and the church through the Word, we should assume that this faith is still alive and was further strengthened through the confirmation instruction. Such a faith is ready always to express itself when a witness is called for. We know that in some this faith may have died and the instruction may have been a formality under parental or social pressure. For this reason it becomes the responsibility of the pastor to show the confirmands the harm in making an insincere confession. Beyond that he cannot go. The final responsibility lies with the catechumen. Any effort to probe into his expressed faith to determine whether the catechumen is sincere is wholly unwarranted and highly dangerous. Even Paul did not suggest it to the Corinthians. In the final analysis, only the manifestly impenitent sinner may be turned away from confirmation.

#### *Surrender to Christ and Obedience to Him*

Baptism is not a passive sacrament. We do not merely become new creatures, put on Christ, and become members of His body. We are new creatures that we may walk in the newness of life; we have been cleansed that we may serve Christ "with fruit unto holiness"; we are members of His body to give ourselves to Christ and to His people. Baptism is an active sacrament implanting in us the dynamic of the Gospel. Through our sponsors we have been called upon to renounce the devil and all his works and to surrender ourselves to the obedience of Christ. Such a surrender we promise daily as the continued significance of our Baptism requires. This we do in a more formal way at confirmation or whenever the occasion demands it.

When we surrender ourselves to Christ

<sup>7</sup> J. M. Reu, *Catechetics or Theory and Practice of Religious Instruction*, 2d rev. ed. (Chicago: Wartburg Publishing House, 1927), pp. 278, 631.



and promise Him obedience, do we not by the same token promise obedience to His church of which He is the Head? Yes, to *that* church and *in those things* with which He has charged His church. It is not a *carte blanche*. When, therefore, the catechumen is asked in the confirmation rite to surrender himself to the "discipline of the church," the church is leaving itself open to serious question and becomes suspect. Such a requirement may be understood correctly. It may imply that the catechumen surrenders himself in obedience to the church only when it acts within its proper sphere and limits itself to the responsibilities specifically given to her by Christ. Viewing this, however, in the light of history, we know that such a demand can be seriously abused. When Christians get together in an organized way, they are easily tempted to make their predilections binding on others. When Bucer introduced the vow of obedience to the church, his purpose was to use confirmation as a device to impose stricter discipline.<sup>8</sup> As well intentioned as Bucer may have been, he thereby created new crops of popes where his formula was used. The same tendency is still prevalent when congregations attempt to legislate their members into a higher sanctification by binding consciences in matters wherein Christ has set them free.

#### *The Baptismal Vow*

The renunciation of the devil and all his works and the confession of faith of the sponsors are often referred to as the

baptismal vows. It appears that sometimes this vow is confused with the baptismal covenant. In such cases this immediately poses the question, Is the vow of the sponsors regarded as the promise of the "second party" in the baptismal covenant? Then the baptismal covenant would no longer be a covenant of grace. Then God's gifts become conditioned by man's action. Or is this a new covenant to be distinguished from God's covenant of grace but made in response to His covenant in Baptism? If so, who is the "other party" in this second covenant? God? What new promise is He making which He has not already made unilaterally and unconditionally in Baptism? What has more likely happened is that in practice the church has used the terms vow and covenant interchangeably. But this is incorrect. The vow of the sponsors in the child's stead is not a covenant. It is a promise made in response to the gracious work of God in the child.

At confirmation the child is asked frequently to repeat or renew this baptismal vow, often with an elaboration that comes to several questions. The elaboration is the result of various theological emphases in the Lutheran Church and sometimes includes accretions which go beyond the Scriptural requirements for the admission to first Communion.

How should the vow be interpreted? Is it considered binding for life? There are many who regard it as such and have given the vow the status of a solemn oath. But is this proper? Assuming that confirmation is not terminal and that Christian growth will continue through further instruction, is it not possible that the communicant will see implications in what he

<sup>8</sup> His views are reflected in the Ziegenhein Order of Church Discipline, 1538 (Ae. L. Richter, *Die evangelischen Kirchenordnungen des 16. Jahrhunderts*; Weimar: Landes-Industrie-comptoir, 1846), I, 291.

has confessed, or what he believed to have confessed, which he did not and could not have seen at the age of 12 to 16? If we can assume that it is possible for a conscientious Christian to accept in error, without destroying his saving faith, a view of the Christian doctrine that is Scripturally untenable but which he nevertheless sincerely believes, can we, dare we, bind his conscience and say that because of the vow he made at 14 he must now remain loyal to the Evangelical Lutheran Church? The problem becomes even more acute when the vow is interpreted to mean a specific synodical body within the Lutheran Church, where the theological differences between synods, as important as they may be, are difficult for the uninitiated to understand. Under such circumstances, would a Christian whom we wish to bind with a lifetime vow be held to the Lutheran Church by the Law or by the drawing power of the Gospel? If he remains with the Lutheran Church merely because of his vow, can he serve it in good conscience, fervently and loyally?

Is it necessary that we attempt to hold any person on the basis of a man-made vow, a vow which may have been made under some pressure, parental or otherwise? Would it not serve the purpose better if the vow were interpreted to mean that it is the catechumen's sincere intent on the basis of an understanding at his level of maturity? To this end he promises, directly or by implication, to remain under the means of grace which alone can keep him in this faith. Thus both the church and the catechumen would place their trust in the power of the Word and in the work of the Spirit rather than in the promise of a person.

### *Instruction in the Word*

A child is brought to Baptism in response to Christ's command to make disciples by baptizing. The church and the parents are at the same time aware that in this injunction of the Lord they are bidden to teach children "to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." With Holy Baptism, therefore, both the home and the church assume the duty to teach the baptized child. For this reason sponsors make the promise that they will hold themselves responsible that this obligation is met by the parents, and if not, that they themselves will assume it. Parents, in effect, say at the Baptism of their child, "We will try to bring up this child as a Christian in the faith here expressed and pledge ourselves to this purpose by our instruction and through our Christian example." The church in turn promises to assist the parent because it recognizes that it shares in this responsibility.

Such teaching the Scriptures call the nurture in the Lord. It is not terminal. It does not end at a given point within the life of the Christian or with a single rite. Nurture is growth; it is evidence of life. Christian education is, therefore, a lifelong process for the child, the youth, and the adult (1 John 2:13). But the church has not always been faithful to such a responsibility. Unfortunately, it has traditionally reserved its major emphasis for the period prior to the child's confirmation. This has placed the church in a dilemma. Since the church has permitted confirmation to become the fixed terminus of formal instruction for the majority of members, it has attempted to gain additional time for its task by postponing confirmation as long as possible, often regret-

ring that it cannot postpone it even longer. But with such a postponement the church has at the same time postponed the child's first Communion and with it has deprived him for several years of the spiritual power and assurance which the Lord intended for His own.

Instead of postponing confirmation as long as possible, the church needs to recover the Reformation principles that Christian instruction must extend beyond the time of the Christian's first Communion. Confirmation must not be re-

garded as a sort of temple curtain beyond which the church cannot guide and direct the young Christian in his religious instruction. In fact, as with the significance of Baptism, Christian nurture ends only when the sinner-saint is transformed into a saint of the Church Triumphant. In such a continuing instruction the church assists the Christian in making his life a *coming into* his Baptism, helping him constantly to appropriate the gifts received in the sacrament.

St. Louis, Mo.

# Prolegomena According to Karl Barth

## A Study in His Ideas Regarding Theology and Dogmatics

By ROBERT D. PREUS

IN a former article I pointed out by way of introduction that Karl Barth by his taking cognizance of both exegesis and church history ranks rightfully above most of his contemporaries as a dogmatician of stature. In the present article I shall try to examine Barth's opinion on the subjects of theology and dogmatics more specifically. We shall find that Barth takes a position on the matter of prolegomena very close to that of the 16th- and 17th-century Lutheran and Reformed teachers, that his position is in the main both Scriptural and sane. Here, although we shall perhaps discern nothing very outstanding in what he says and advocates, we shall find him to diverge very radically from most of his contemporaries. It will be up to us, after studying his views on prolegomena and dogmatics, to judge whether he himself has followed his own principles successfully.

### 1. THEOLOGY AS SCIENCE

Barth offers the usual definition of theology as a function of the church which consists in *sermo de divinitate*, with the addition of this important emphasis, that theology, language about God, is confession. Here at the very outset he shows that he is getting back to the issue of the older classical Lutheran and Reformed dogmaticians. He sees here the great responsibility of the church before God in speaking about God. And he is quick to point out

that the church owes her sufficiency here as in all things to God's grace (I, 1, 1ff.).<sup>1a</sup> Theology can obtain in the church only by virtue of God's promise to the church. "Christian language has its source in Him" (I, 1, 3). All this may seem so self-evident to us as to be mere cant. But it is a most necessary emphasis to be maintained in our age in the face of many evolutionary theories concerning the origin and development of theology, in the face of modern ideas concerning comparative religion, etc. Whether Barth can be considered a universalist is not quite clear. With his doctrine of justification and sanctification which embraces mankind as a whole he verges perilously close to an *apokatastasis*. But one thing is crystal clear in his theology: he denies that there is any true and saving knowledge of God apart from the revelation in Christ. Likewise Barth denies all natural theology—and of course we must disagree with him in this. However, this denial means that he will definitely adhere to the principle of the older Protestant theologians that, as they used to put it, God is the *principium essendi* of theology, or as we might put it, God is the Author of theology, all theology has its only source in Him. Hence we see Barth finding little difference between Paul and

<sup>1a</sup> The reference here and elsewhere in this article is to Barth's *Church Dogmatics* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1936—)

John and Peter, for there is really no theology of John or Paul or Peter but only the theology of God.

Barth makes much of theology being faithful to its own principles, and not employing principles which are foreign to it, such as principles of philosophy. Actually, he says (I, 1, 5), there has never been such a phenomenon as *philosophia Christiana*. If it was *philosophia* it was not *Christiana*, and if it was *Christiana* it was not *philosophia*. There can be no epistemological basis, then, for theology. The question, How do I know? cannot be answered from outside the circle of theology itself. Thus any effort to assign theology a place in a system of sciences is quite impossible. This, however, does not mean that theology is not scientific in its operations. In this latter sense it can be called a science, in that (1) like all sciences it is a human effort after a definite object of knowledge, (2) like other sciences it follows a definite, consistent path of knowledge, and (3) it is accountable to itself. But it cannot allow itself to be taught by other sciences in either what or how to speak. "It has not to justify itself before them [other sciences], least of all by submitting to the claims of any concept of science, whether its general validity is accidental or not" (I, 1, 7). So the question is settled: theology is not a science in the accepted sense of the word. And Barth repeats himself over and over again on this particular point—one might say too much, for he takes theology out of the realm of the cosmos entirely (again suggesting shades of docetism).<sup>1b</sup> For God came into this

cosmos and became true man in this cosmos, and every *opus ad extra* of which theology may speak is directed to our cosmos, and thus has something authoritative to say to all other areas of knowledge. That Barth tends to cut off theology from other areas of knowledge will of course safeguard theology by isolating it; but at a cost, for then what happens to theology as a *habitus practicus*? At just this point Barth has often been criticized, that he is up in the clouds—one may call this transcendentalism or existentialism or whatever one will. Perhaps this all goes back to Barth's vehement denial of natural revelation, to his denial of any relationship between the realms of nature and of grace, and to his fear and conviction that man gains control over everything within the realm of nature. Here we might quote a review of Vol. I, 2 in the *Times Literary Supplement* of May 23, 1958.

It is past high time that a much more vigorous protest was made against the endlessly repeated assertion by Barth and other Bible theologians that any truth discoverable by man is something of which man remains master and ministers to human pride. Such truth can, of course, be put to sinful uses; but no man in his senses tampers with it as *truth* if he is persuaded that it is true.

Barth, then, in one sense, affirms that theology is a science; in another sense, denies it. That it is a human inquiry after truth qualifies it as a science. But if it is

as *fundamentally* necessary. [The emphasis is mine. By inserting the term "systematic" Barth is avoiding the issue. But the apodosis is a *non sequitur*. And surely for us theology is necessary.] That is exactly what it cannot do. It absolutely [sic!] cannot regard itself as a member of an ordered cosmos, but only a stopgap in an unordered one."

<sup>1b</sup> I, 1, 9: "To put itself in a *systematic* relationship with the other sciences, theology would have to regard its own special existence

asked to work under the same roof and in systematic conjunction with the other sciences, then it will not qualify. Concerning the first point Barth says that theology—and here he is speaking only of the church's language about God—must not be raised ontologically above the other sciences. What he means by "ontologically" in this connection I do not understand, but when he says that this is insinuated when theology is called *doctrina* and *sapientia*, we shall surely have to part ways with him. These are precisely the Scripture terms for theology (1 Cor. 2:6; 1 Tim. 4:6; Rom. 6:7; 2 Tim. 3:16). Again we have the intimation that theology is only a quest, only an approximation, like other sciences.

We must be grateful to Barth for his reluctance to call theology a science. Here he distinguishes himself as wishing to be in the stream of orthodox Christian theology. And here he is opposed to the Lundensian school (as represented particularly by Aulén and Nygren), which holds that theology is a science with the same detached, objective method as any other and "concerned simply with investigating and clarifying a certain area of research."<sup>2</sup>

## 2. DOGMATICS AS INQUIRY

Theology consists in making assertions, says Barth (I, 1, 13). As Luther said, "Take away assertions, and you have done away with Christianity."<sup>3</sup> And theology is concerned with divine, certain knowledge. Again as Luther said, "The Holy Spirit is no skeptic, neither does He write doubts

or mere opinions in our hearts, but assertions which are more certain and stable than life itself and all experience."<sup>4</sup>

Yet in spite of all this, dogmatics is inquiry. For there is no such thing as "truths of revelation," propositions sealed "once for all by divine authority in wording and meaning," for revelation has its truth in the free decision of God. Thus the truth of revelation is the freely acting God Himself. And hence creeds and dogmatic statements can guide us in our dogmatic work, but can never replace that work by virtue of their authority. Moreover, Barth says, "In dogmatics it can never be a question of the mere combination, repetition, and the summarizing of Biblical doctrine" (I, 1, 16). And then he correctly cites Melancthon as understanding dogmatics in this simple sense. In fact, not Melancthon only but all the old Lutheran and Reformed dogmatics understood this as its simple task. It might be well to quote Melancthon's words which Barth perhaps has in mind. They are at the very beginning of his *Loci praecipui theologici* of 1559.

It is beneficial to have clear declarations (*testimonia*) set forth as on a tablet concerning each of the articles of Christian doctrine, arranged in good order, in order that when we consider these things and tie them together, certain definite thoughts come to our view by which troubled people may be instructed, elevated, strengthened, and comforted.<sup>5</sup>

We would concur with this simple purpose of dogmatics, that it is in the end mere recital. If Barth feels that this would prevent dogmatics from being timely, Melancthon and the older theology would

<sup>2</sup> G. Aulén, *The Faith of the Christian Church* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1948), p. 5. For Nygren see G. Wingren, *Theology in Conflict* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1958), pp. 11 ff.

<sup>3</sup> WA 18, 603.

<sup>4</sup> WA 18, 605.

<sup>5</sup> *Corpus Reformatorum* 21, 601.

answer definitely that Scripture does speak to every age. Actually, as Barth goes on in his second volume to outline the task of dogmatics, he seems to be following Melancthon, at least in theory. In fact, this is Barth's strength, that he insists upon making the task of dogmatics so simple.

### 3. DOGMATICS AS AN ACT OF FAITH

In speaking of dogmatics as an act of faith Karl Barth deserves to be heard today, especially as an antidote to the scientific theologizing (if there is such a thing) of the Lundensian theologians. He maintains that dogmatics need not be the work of a special theological science. Dogmatics is rather a calling given the church, and is impossible outside the church. He quotes Calvin, "All true knowledge of God is born of obedience."<sup>6</sup> But faith, the prerequisite of dogmatics, cannot be maintained at will. And so dogmatics depends upon God. In other words Barth is maintaining strongly the old theological insight that there is no unregenerate theology and hence no unregenerate dogmatics. We must get behind Schleiermacher, pietism, and rationalism to the doctrine of a theological *habitus*, "in virtue of which the theologian is what he is by the grace of God" (I, 1, 21). Listen to one of his more poignant statements concerning this vital matter.

Faith, rebirth, conversion, "existential" thinking (i.e., thinking that proceeds on the basis of existential perplexity) is indeed the indispensable requisite for dogmatic work; not so far as the intention is to include an experience and attitude to which I adjust myself, which I put into train, a "Yes, I'll go!" on the theologian's

part, so that his theology would have to be throughout a personal cry, a narrative of his own biographical situation: but so far as thereby is meant the grace of divine predestination, the free gift of the Word and of the Holy Spirit, the act of calling him into the Church which ever and anon the theologian must encounter from the acting God, in order that he may be what he is called and does, what answers to his name. (I, 1, 22)

This surely sounds like one who has been touched by what Luther means by *oratio*, *meditatio*, and *tentatio*. Listen to Barth, again,

Without exception the act of faith (i.e., its basis in divine predestination, the free act of God on man and his work) is the condition which renders dogmatic work possible, by which also it is called in question in deadly earnest. (I, 1, 23)

This statement which is so necessary today reminds us of a word of Hyperius, who wrote what is probably the first Protestant work on the subject of studying theology. He says,

You will find that no one will seriously make his way into the Sacred Writings unless God first of all sets his heart ablaze with the earnest desire of knowing Christian teachings.<sup>7</sup>

Hyperius, too, insists that the arrogant mind cannot theologize. Dogmatics is a calling, a calling for which three things are required: (1) that all foreign and vain thoughts be cast out when we approach the Word of God; (2) involvement (notice the existential element we saw in Barth): simple knowledge of theology is not enough. *Scientia inflat, charitas aedi-*

<sup>7</sup> A. Hyperius, *De theologo, seu de ratione studii theologici*, Libri IIII (Basileae: per Ioan-nem Operinum, 1556), p. 25.

<sup>6</sup> *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, I, 6, 2.



*ficat*; (3) prayer to God for light and help. I mention Hyperius to illustrate that Barth's emphasis here is far from new but that he is found to be in the tradition of every pious and true theologian; for Hyperius' emphasis was carried on until the age of rationalism. Thus we see that Barth insists that theology is not merely language about God but, as Hollaz put it, language to God; and this is true of dogmatics.

#### 4. THE TASK OF PROLEGOMENA

Barth, who writes 1,300 pages on the subject of prolegomena (including his discussion of the Word), admits that the subject of prolegomena is not necessary. Prolegomena might be proved and shown by the very practice of them, as was done in early Protestant dogmatics. This has also been attempted by modern theologians, e.g., Schlatter.

Barth also speaks against the quite modern contention that prolegomena are necessary today (although not in past times) because of the attacks made upon Christianity and the self-assurance of modern man. Barth asserts, first, that there is really no difference between our time and any other on this matter. Theology has always been faced with rejection and negation (I, 2, 29). Second, to say that prolegomena are more necessary today is to undermine dogmatics itself, for in dogmatics the language of the church is measured by her own essence; revelation cannot be proved from the outside. The question, Is revelation possible? is illegitimate for dogmatics. Third, dogmatics loses by asking questions which have not been asked before simply to be up to date. Here Barth should make some enemies. He is saying that apologetics and polemics of faith against un-

belief is always something really unintended, that is, it is not our doing; it takes place only when God sides with the witness of the truth. He goes so far as to say that polemics and apologetics take unbelief seriously but faith not quite seriously, and in this cease to be faith. These are strong words which much of Lutheranism can take to heart today.

Getting back again to the original question, Are prolegomena necessary? Barth states that there is this much necessity: the church must set forth true faith as opposed to heresy. In this prolegomena are authoritative, not argumentative. I am not sure what Barth means by this, except that in his own prolegomena he really does little else than establish the place of Scripture in the church.

Barth asks a second question regarding prolegomena. Are they possible? Can we know the path which is to be trod in knowing dogmatics? He begins this discussion by pointing to the three paths which have been taken. 1. *The Enlightenment*. Schleiermacher started with the existence of the church and of faith. But this, says Barth cleverly, is not prolegomena, but dogmatics. Such subjectivism is followed by Heidegger and Bultmann. 2. *Rome*. Rome says that the task of prolegomena is to find that Scripture, tradition, and the living teaching of the church are the principles of theological knowledge. Barth says that this, too, is in the realm of dogmatic propositions. 3. *The Evangelical (or Barthian) position* begins with the "event" of faith, not with an existential ontology or a Romish *es gibt*. This position which concentrates on the subject *de Scriptura*, or the Word of God, as the criterion of dogmatics (because it has



spoken to us) — this position Barth identifies with the "Old-Protestant theology." (I, 1, 47)

#### 5. CHURCH PROCLAMATION AS THE MATERIAL OF DOGMATICS

When Barth speaks of church proclamation as the material of dogmatics he lapses again into his *Schwaermerei* and is therefore unsatisfactory. His thesis in itself is correct, but when he says that this proclamation is God's own Word only "when and where God pleases," we are again left up in the air. We can only hope that our proclamation becomes God's Word and therefore effective dogmatics (I, 2, 79 ff., 156). This would imply, I suppose, that when proclamation becomes the Word of God, dogmatics becomes the Word of God. This seems to avoid the "static" concept of pure doctrine, something which we would insist belongs in the discussion at this very point. But pure doctrine is not the task of dogmatics to Barth, but the "problem" of dogmatics. And to him pure doctrine is not something objective, not a body or teaching or tradition (cf. the Pastoral Epistles), but again an "event," as we shall see later (I, 2, 769). We may recall that he made it the task of prolegomena to set forth *faith* (not pure doctrine) against heresy. (I, 1, 33 ff.)

Regarding church proclamation as the material of dogmatics Barth insists on two points. First, it is fundamental for our work. Everything depends on it. "The church ought to withdraw from all other responsibilities," he says (I, 1, 81). On the other hand the church is never infallible in its proclamation. We must call this proclamation into question at times. Barth says, "The church can neither abso-

lutely question her proclamation or absolutely put it right" (I, 1, 84). And it is true, we never know it all in matters of dogmatics. But we get the feeling here that Barth is limiting dogmatics somehow, as though we could never be certain of the material of our dogmatics. Concerning his own work in dogmatics Barth said somewhere, "To live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often."

#### 6. PURE DOCTRINE AS THE PROBLEM OF DOGMATICS

It is not until the last pages of his second volume that Barth comes to grips with the subject of pure doctrine. He recognizes that all preaching is faced with the question of correctness. What, then, is pure doctrine? It is not the same as what God does when He speaks His Word (I, 2, 762). No, "pure doctrine as the fulfillment of the promise given to church proclamation *is an event*" (I, 2, 768). It is a gift not only given to the church but also received by it, involved in the obedience of faith. In this sense pure doctrine is "a task, a piece of work which faces us." It is not in "any sense to be thought of as a solution already existing somewhere or other, which can be taken over as such." "A simple appropriation of this kind cannot possibly be the business of dogmatics when it is understood as the attempt of the church to achieve purity of doctrine." *Thus we see that pure doctrine is only an ideal, and doctrine is to be taken only in the active sense.* Doctrine is only the "work itself," never a result. One must be aware of this basic equivocation when he hears Barth speaking of pure doctrine. To Barth pure doctrine is a mere function.

As pure doctrine in the Barthian sense, dogmatics is the necessary preparation for preaching. It occupies a middle place between exegesis and practical theology. By serving preaching in this way dogmatics guards against allowing any alien philosophy to impose itself upon the Biblical Word. Thus it acts as a constant corrective and guardian. And dogmatics also keeps the church from asking the wrong questions.

#### 7. DOGMATICS AS ETHICS

Under this heading Barth discusses the problem whether ethics belongs within dogmatics or whether it is a separate discipline. Barth is very insistent that ethics must not have an independent existence apart from dogmatics. Where ethics has been able to secure independence, it has absorbed dogmatics into itself and transformed dogmatics into an ethical system. And "since independent ethical systems are always in the last resort determined by general anthropology, this inevitably means that dogmatics itself and theology as a whole simply becomes applied anthropology. Its standard ceases to be the Word of God" (I, 2, 783). Barth traces the origin of this evil development to the 17th-century Lutheran theologian George Calixtus, who in 1634 put out his *Epitome theologiae moralis*. This tack is followed by Pietism and the Enlightenment until we find the full-blown system of Kant, which makes religion and God subservient to ethics. But if we will only go back to Luther and Calvin we shall see that their ethics "is to be sought and found in their dogmatics and not elsewhere."

We shall want to listen to Barth very carefully on this point. He insists that ethics substitutes the subject man for the

subject God, and hence the church which operates with an independent ethics commits a *metabasis eis allo genos*. More than that, it has "subjected itself to an utterly alien sovereignty." It is Barth's Christocentricity and monergism which cause him to speak this way.

#### 8. THE TASK OF DOGMATICS

The task of dogmatics is to make the teaching of the church definite and uniform. Dogmatics is not in itself Biblical exegesis. "It is the examination, criticism, and correction of the proclamation to which the teaching church addresses itself on the basis of Holy Scripture, not merely by reproducing it and explaining it, but also by applying it and thus in some measure producing it" (I, 2, 821). Here we see that Barth really is quite close to Melancthon's simple definition of the task of dogmatics, except that he adds the qualification — which Melancthon himself would have granted — that dogmatics be *zeitgemaess*.

The task of dogmatics to Barth has its formal and material side. The formal task is to listen constantly to the Word of God. The material task is to speak, to unfold the content of the Word of God. The one work must not be done without the other. The dogmatic norm for such activity is the Bible. The church must see that its formulae and demonstrations have a Biblical character. This, says Barth, is a necessary "basic mode of thinking." Although we are conditioned by our own situation — this cannot be denied — nevertheless we must orientate ourselves in the Bible. Of course, any man will approach the Bible with a "philosophy" of some kind or other, and to the extent that this controls his con-

ception and judgment he "becomes a witness whose credibility is obscured" (I, 2, 818). Barth says:

It is impossible to remove from dogmatic thinking and speaking this subjective element, just as it is impossible to remove from it its human character. But it is certainly possible—and this possibility gives meaning to the demand for the biblical attitude—to have an awareness of this state of affairs, and as a result of this awareness to recognize and make room for a specific ranking within dogmatic thought and speech. (Ibid.)

What we must guard against is that these elements become independent presuppositions. Our only presupposition is that God has spoken in a certain and definite way. Here Barth is speaking against Bultmann, who begins his reading of the Bible with the philosophico-anthropological presuppositions of Heidegger. And we would certainly feel quite sympathetic with Barth.

But we must remember what Barth means when he says that God "has acted and spoken in a certain definite way." We must recall that God's speaking is only in Christ, according to Barth. Scripture, theology, human language, as such, can never be God's revelation, God speaking. God speaks only in a free act, and words are only the occasion (if it pleases God) of this act. Here, along with the Jesuit Malevez, who has written a splendid book on Bultmann, we shall have to say that Barth is deficient.<sup>8</sup> He passes over too lightly this significant fact that God in coming to man and speaking to him as he is

in his state of corruption, condescends (*συνατάβασις* is the word coined by Chrysostom) to disclose himself to man's noetic capacity, to man's way of knowing and thinking. To fallen man God reveals mysteries the full explanation of which we can never probe, but still mysteries which are clothed in our *genus loquendi*. From beginning to end our understanding of theology is God's work in us. This Barth maintains against Bultmann. There is no pat existential way of thinking which makes theology accessible, Barth says. In other words, Barth insists that we learn to read Scripture by reading Scripture; Scripture is its own interpreter. That there is a content of natural knowledge of God which is necessary as a point of contact for God's revelation (as Brunner and Rome teach) Barth would, as we know, deny. We shall not wish to make so much of this "content" of the natural knowledge of God as the Thomists and many neo-orthodox Protestants do, for we believe in total depravity, and whatever the content of this knowledge it cannot serve as a criterion for receiving God's revelation. But in this we shall agree with the Thomists and with Malevez, I am sure, that the Word of God comes to us in the form of our conceptual thought, so that even an unregenerate man may have a *notitia literae* in reference both to Scripture and to Christian theology. Although we cannot go along with Barth entirely, as I have outlined, I am sure we shall be thankful to him as being a welcome antidote against Emil Brunner, John Baillie, and Reinhold Niebuhr, who teach that there is a saving knowledge of God apart from Christ.

Summing up, then, the first task of dogmatics is to listen to the Bible and gauge

<sup>8</sup> L. Malevez, *The Christian Message and Myth* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1958), pp. 192 ff.

its formulation by it. The second task is to listen to the fathers, to what the church of the past has said. On this point Barth adopts a very sane approach, which would correspond closely to our Lutheran position. He is, of course, somewhat bothered by the concern of confessional Lutherans toward their symbols, and he feels that the rigidity which would keep Christians apart on the basis of standing confessions is unfortunate (I, 2, 838), although he wants to be the last one to make light of doctrinal differences (I, 2, 126, 133, 135). The third task of dogmatics is to listen to the church today.

### 9. DOGMATIC METHOD

Dogmatic method deals with procedure, procedure in unfolding the content of the Word of God. All that is necessary here is that the "content of the Word of God itself must command, and dogmatics and church proclamation must obey" (I, 2, 856). There is no necessary external method. The only absolute requirement is to transmit the Word of God. Freedom in dogmatic method is something which Barth, like Pieper, holds very precious. Theology is not a system in the sense of being a structure of principles and their consequences, founded on the presupposition of a basic view of things, and perhaps made consistent with various outside helps. Barth criticizes Luthardt, Kaftan, Seeberg, and others for their attempts to relegate Christianity to certain basic principles. Thus we find that he far prefers the earlier local method of the Lutheran and Reformed dogmaticians to the later method which is built on *articuli fundamentales* and *articuli non fundamentales*, etc. This latter method (of Quenstedt, Hollaz, et al.)

is not wrong in itself but will usually lead to rationalizing and false emphases. So far we would probably agree with Barth. However, when he goes on to say that what is fundamental in one generation may not be in the next and that only in our own existential situation may we know what is fundamental and cannot declare it in advance, we would say no (I, 2, 865). Barth becomes decidedly anticredal at this point.

I now quote a fine statement of Barth on the reason why he rejects the so-called analytic method of the 17th century, for this will tend to explain what Barth wishes to do in his own dogmatics:

From a historical point of view, it may be said, therefore, that we have to dismiss the so-called "analytic" method which made its entry into Protestant theology at the beginning of the 17th century, and finally received expression in the doctrine of fundamental articles. We must return to the method of the *loci*, the method of Melancthon and also of Calvin, which was wrongly set aside as unscholarly by the more progressive contemporaries of J. Gerhard and A. Polanus. For this is the only truly scholarly method in dogmatics. The *loci* of the older orthodoxy were in fact basic dogmatic tenets which did not pretend any higher syntheses than arise out of the Word of God, or to be rooted and held together in any higher system than that of the Word of God. (I, 2, 870)

Since this is Barth's conviction we find that in his own dogmatics, although he feels, for instance, that the atonement is a most important doctrine, he will not subsume all theology under the doctrine of the atonement, or any other doctrine, as *the* fundamental truth. What Barth

comes up with is a method which in theory seems not only commendable but desirable. Since theology cannot be integrated into any system, a doctrine (say, of God as Creator) must be handled independently alongside the next doctrine (God as Redeemer). Thus Barth comes up with four *loci* which will constitute his whole dogmatics: God, Creation, Atonement, Redemption. (eschatology), with the Word of God as the basis of knowledge of all four.

We must now ask the obvious final question: Has Barth succeeded in constructing a dogmatics which adequately serves what to him is the purpose of dogmatics? To him the purpose of dogmatics is to serve the Word of God in a didactic capacity. Actually this is quite similar to the older Protestant dogmatics with its simple *loci communes* method and its simple purpose, namely, to teach, to present in summary form and in logical order the articles of faith so that one could comprehend, appreciate, and judge the doctrine of the church. Accordingly dogmatics had merely to gather together the passages concerning various articles and learn what they said (Melancthon). Really little prolegomena were necessary except to state that Scripture was the *principium cognoscendi* of theology and to elaborate perhaps on the relation of theology to logic and philosophy. To notice paradoxes or solve lacunae was held down by the local method, whereby if one article did not correspond to another, the matter was simply left at that. Scripture was considered to be the formal principle of theology, and justification or the work of Christ the material principle. Barth often insists that

method is arbitrary, but by his spiral approach, his aversion to rhetorical presentation and theological distinctions, his Christological approach—which makes him want to speak about everything at once—and his dialectical language he has made it exceedingly difficult for himself to achieve his purpose. This will surely be the judgment of any impartial reader. There must be a middle ground between no dogmatics and Barth's dogmatics. Barth has become easier reading in later years, but he has become no less verbose. I close with a harsh criticism of an unsympathetic reader of Barth (*The Times Literary Supplement* [London], May 23, 1959):

Anglo-Saxon theologians do not resent large works [Barth had suggested this], though they have constant difficulty in persuading students to read them. But they attach little importance to merely dogmatic declamations and require reasonable grounds to be given for them; they also dislike endless repetition, not least when there is little in it but an apparent assumption that the mere linking of abstract notions yields knowledge of realities; and when they have to read sentences several times to apprehend their meaning (if any) they conclude that their author has not bestowed upon their construction the care and critical thought which alone is worthy of the subject or of their attention; when a voluminous writer cannot make himself clear to readers familiar with his subject, they infer that his own mind is not clear, and require that he should clear it before expecting them to read millions of his words with care.

Such criticism is needlessly severe, but it must be said that Barth has brought much of it upon himself.

## *Outlines on the Synodical Conference Gospels, Second Series*

JUDICA

MATT. 23:34-39

The PTR and its effect on the congregation and the community. The Lenten preaching. How is it faring? Really nothing new. We have been preaching, teaching, and reaching through our personal contacts and those of our missionaries, including the radio and TV witness, for many, many years. Does the fact that a spectacular success eludes us serve to dampen our enthusiasm? True, there has been progress. In the aggregate the results are heartening. But defections to the world, militant agnosticism, and resurging heathenism tend to offset gains made. What of those who refuse our witness? We are not out for blood. Nor are we interested in heaping maledictions on those who will not walk with us. But folks must face up to the fact that rejection of the Gospel is a crime and that punishment surely follows. God will judge.

### Crime and Punishment

#### I. *How great the crime*

A. God's wonderful salvation provided freely. (1) The deep depths of man's despair because of sin. (2) The only remedy for sin — God's gift. (3) Nothing man can or need do to receive it.

B. God's salvation offered freely. (1) Old Testament prophets, wise men and scribes. To Abel and Zachariah are to be added Noah, the preacher of righteousness, the prophet Baalam and lesser lights, as well as those generally referred to under this concept. The parish preachers of that day were prophets. (2) Witness of life. Abel's witness seems to have been as much that of his

life as of his words. Hence under this designation we dare not forget the "living epistles" (Zachariah mentioned in the last book of ancient Old Testament. Hence Abel to Zachariah, though Urijah, historically, is much later. Harmonization of apparent contradiction: (a) Luther: Jehoiada had the added name of Barachiah, (b) Chronicles names Zachariah after his illustrious grandfather, Matthew after his father.) (3) New Testament preachers. From Apostles down to our day and on to the end of the world. (4) Through His Son, who never wearied of pleading. Offers salvation once more (v. 39) at the time of the triumphal entry.

C. But men rejected it. (1) Those rejecting are not heathen, but members of God's covenant people. "Pharisees and Scribes" "Jerusalem." (2) Brutal manner of rejection. Were not satisfied as those in Noah's day simply to reject, but viciously "hunted from town to town, flogged in their synagogues, killed, and crucified" those sent unto them (parable of the wicked husbandmen), Peter, Simeon (Eusebius 3, 23), James, Stephen, Paul (five scourgings). Many more. Foxe, *Book of Martyrs*. Blood, blood, blood, was the answer to the Lord's offer of grace. (3) But modern man's rejection of God's grace in the present day as emphatic and as damning though not as brutal. Russia. Modern intellectuals.

D. What effect on us? (1) Redoubling of preaching, teaching, reaching efforts and continuance throughout the year. (2) Holier living. (3) Greater giving for church and missions. (4) More fervent "wrestling with God" in prayer.



II. *Punishment*

A. God's patience. "Mills of God grind slowly, but nonetheless very fine." Long delay of punishment. Repeated efforts. "*How often*," v. 37. 120 years in Noah's case. But the day of grace will end. Examples. Flood, destruction of Jerusalem, end of world.

B. Crime and punishment are cumulative, v. 36. "The iniquity of the fathers upon the children," Ex. 20. Failure to profit by previous lessons from history and Scripture brings severe punishment.

C. The punishment is not death or annihilation, though God has used these in the past many times, but "your house left you desolate." Religion and religious exercises devoid of their heart and center, Christ. Man is religious. He has a god, but false god. Failure to heed the call of God results in a religious system devoid of the true religion. Mere superstition. Amos: famine of the Word. The greater punishment.

D. How is it with you? (1) Day of grace still at hand though the long shadows of evening are evident. Are you a believer holding penitently to your Savior? (2) Don't be dissuaded from your God-given task. Let difficulty spur you on to snatch the brands from the burning from among your contemporaries. (3) Take comfort from rejection, since "they so persecuted the prophets before you." Puts you into select company.

San Francisco, Calif.

ARTHUR C. NITZ

## PALM SUNDAY

JOHN 12:1-11

"Hosanna; Hosanna! . . . Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord!" Garment-carpeted streets, a sea of waving palm branches, the thunderous shout of the multitude singing the Messianic song, the delightful chorus of children's voices—all these

things give this day a gay, festive air. But in the propers of this Sunday we heard the deep overtones of pathos, of melancholy, of sadness. Again and again we hear the cry of our Savior, pressed from the anguish of hell, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" The Lamb is about to be led to the slaughter, for evil hands will take Him and nail Him to a tree. Yet on this day there is the definite note of triumph. We hear it come through in the Gradual, "I will declare Thy name unto My brethren; in the midst of the congregation will I praise Thee." There will be a congregation. There will always be those who will sing the Palm Sunday anthem, "Hosanna," save now, O my Lord and King. On this festival day our text presents not only those who accepted Him, who came unto them meek and lowly, but also those who would destroy and crucify Him. To bring these two groups vividly into focus to the end that we may ever acclaim Him our Lord and King, I shall weave my remarks about this thought.

The Broken Alabaster Box  
or the Bag of a Thief

I. *Jesus came to establish His kingdom*

A. "The Kingdom of God"—this was the New Testament theme. Christ's herald John had come to prepare the way for the King and the establishment of His kingdom. "Repent for the kingdom of God is at hand." He pointed to the type of king this kingdom would have, "Behold, the Lamb of God. . ."

B. When Christ began His public ministry, He had but one theme, His kingdom. On Palm Sunday He wanted all men to know that He, their King, was coming to them. This week He would openly come out as the King when before Pilate He would regally announce: "You say that I am a King. For this I was born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness of the truth" (John 18:37 RSV). On Good Friday His



brow would be crowned with cruel thorns. The scepter would be pressed into His bound hands. "Behold, your King!" On Golgotha He would be enthroned on a cross.

II. *The people of Jesus' day were confronted with the alternative of either accepting or rejecting this King*

A. This King calls for a decision. "He that is not for Me is against Me." The question of Pilate, "What then shall I do with your King?" is inescapable for all of us.

B. Even some human beings evoke either our strongest affection and loyalty or our most intense dislike and animosity. We are either all for them or all against them. With Jesus Christ this is true even to a greater degree. Either you are Saul the persecutor of Christ, or Paul the persecuted for Christ.

C. This is very evident in our text. Either Mary with the broken alabaster box of ointment or Judas with the bag of a thief. Mary of Bethany knew what kind of king Jesus was. She understood what His kingdom was. She knew that He was about to be taken and put to death (v. 7). She knew that He was the Lamb of God come to suffer and die for her sins. So did Lazarus, who sat at meat with Jesus. He had experienced at first hand the power of Jesus over the consequences of sin. He was a living proof of that. So was Simon the Leper, who had arranged this banquet. Jesus had freed him from the ravages of sin. He, the erstwhile leper, was clean. The blood of Jesus, he knew, would cleanse him from all sins. So did Martha, who served. She had heard the King say, "I am the Resurrection and the Life. . . ." She had stood next to the King as Lazarus was brought back to life. She believed in Him. She, too, would live.

D. If He was the King, then nothing could be spared. He demanded the best. He demanded Mary's all. (The value of the spikenard represented the average earnings for one year.)

E. Judas, in turn, had not accepted the Meek and Lowly One, the One who had come to give His life as a ransom for his sins. Therefore he complained about the waste on such a king. That is why he stole from the King's treasury.

III. *We are still confronted with the alternative of either totally accepting the King or rejecting Him*

(If confirmation is observed on this day, the preacher will have an opportunity to set before the confirmands the challenge of either breaking the alabaster bottle over the Savior or clutching the bag of a thief.)

A. You can be a Simon, a Lazarus, a Martha, a Mary, or you can be a Judas, a chief priest, a Pharisee. (V. 10)

B. Pray to God that our entire life may ever be an evidence that we have spilled the spikenard of our love and devotion upon Him who is our Lord and our King.

Minneapolis, Minn.

FREDERICK E. GESKE

MAUNDY THURSDAY

LUKE 22:7-20

(The goal of this sermon is that at every celebration of Holy Communion during the year the believer will have a more pointed remembrance of Christ in some particular aspect of His grace and mercy and power and strength and love. Under the guidance and blessing of the Holy Spirit, such Gospel remembrances will enrich his experiences at the altar.)

An old cracked cup on a shelf in the apartment of William Somerset Maugham seems completely out of place. Here is how the British dramatist explains its presence amid the luxuries of his home. During World War II Maugham was in southern France when France fell: He was one of a group of British subjects herded into two small cargo vessels. The passengers were crowded and tense, food and water were scarce, and enemy

submarines were all around. The big moment of each day came when the skimpy supplies were doled out. Then that cracked cup held Maugham's daily allotment of water. Now, in his apartment, it says, "Call to remembrance the former days." That cup brings him back to earth when he starts taking too much for granted. Tonight a cup stands on our altar. It's not a cracked cup; rather, a cup that is precious in more ways than one. It, too, is a reminder—not of privation but of plenty, the plentiful riches and bounties of God's grace. As we prepare to drink from that cup and eat the bread that goes with it, our text urges us:

Remember the Lord, Who Remembered You

*I. In preparing our salvation God remembered everything that was necessary*

A. From eternity God gave attention to every detail in arranging for the banquet of eternal salvation. His plans reached their climax when His Son became our Passover, sacrificed for us (vv. 15—18). Holy Week holds before our eyes this glorious Gospel truth, which is brought into especially sharp focus in the night He was betrayed.

B. One night long ago the Lord graciously "passed over" certain houses in Egypt, but He passed over no detail in preparing our salvation.

C. There is only one thing that He does not remember: our sins. (Ps. 79:8; Is. 38:17; 43:25)

D. Following the pattern of being "mindful of us" (Ps. 115:12), our Lord, on the first Maundy Thursday, gave attention to every detail in arranging for a meeting place where He would eat the last passover with His apostles. (Vv. 7—13)

E. He also remembered, in the foot washing (cf. Gospel), to give us an example of true humility, the kind of humility that should mark our relationship to Him and

our approach to His altar as well as our relationship to one another.

F. Looking across the years, Jesus remembered that His apostles and we would soon tend to forget a Lord that cannot be seen. So He accommodated Himself to our earth-bound ways, and recognizing our need for something tangible to remember Him by, He gave it to us. Tonight we celebrate the institution of this heavenly meal and thank Him for His thoughtfulness in leaving us this ongoing reminder and assurance of His love for every single one of us. (Vv. 19, 20)

*II. In communing at His altar, we should remember everything that Christ has done and all He is and means to us (vv. 19, 20; 1 Cor. 11:25)*

A. It is impossible at each Communion to remember all or even most of the many different representations of Christ in the Scriptures. However, it is good that we do more than just remember that He died for us. Some communicants never seem to get beyond this consideration. To be sure, in our communing we do always proclaim our faith in His atoning death. We also agree that it is impossible to overemphasize the significance and importance of that death. Nevertheless the Bible does tell us other things about Christ. We are to remember Him in these other connections also.

B. The Gospel and sermon on each festival or Lord's Day present Christ in some particular light and stress some special aspect of His life or love or work. Remember *that* about Him as He meets you at His altar. E.g., on Easter Day, as I commune, I remember that it is my privilege to take right into my own person the same body and blood that Joseph and Nicodemus once laid on the cold slab of the garden grave. But it is a living body, for on Easter morn He rose victoriously out of the tomb. This is the same Christ who by the miracle of the sacrament would

live and dwell with me, the same Christ who would be the Lord of my life through all eternity. Alleluia!

(Include other examples of linking the presentation of Christ in the Gospel for a given day and doing "this in remembrance of" Him. Use the post-Easter Sundays. The same Christ who was patient with Thomas is patient with me and imparts to my body the same body that Thomas was privileged to handle; the Good Shepherd gives me His body and blood beneath visible forms as evidence of the fact that I am one of the straying, silly sheep for whom He gave His life—this I remember as He says, "given into death for you . . . shed for the remission of your sins." Bearing in mind how much of this procedure will be helpful to his particular flock in achieving the goal of the sermon, the pastor can at his discretion continue or cut off this procedure.)

C. If we follow these suggestions, our Communion remembrances will actually become more studied and deliberate and happier receptions of His many-sided grace. Let there be no misunderstanding. These are remembrances triggered by the Holy Spirit and the promptings of the Word. Our remembrance does not make the sacrament or improve the meal as such. Christ alone makes the sacrament. His Word alone gives it power. He alone has the gifts to offer. At this meal He is always the Host. I am His guest, invited by boundless grace. But the guest who is dull and listless and indifferent, who has his mind fixed on only one part of the banquet, is going to miss many of the fine offerings of the Host.

Whenever you come to His festive board, make it a point to remember the Lord, who has so graciously remembered you. Remember, the very Christ who spoke to you in the oral Word would now strengthen and enrich you with the "visible Word." He would keep you spiritually strong and healthy so that the prayer of your dying hour might be, "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy

kingdom." Be sure of this, His thrilling answer to that prayer will be, "Today thou shalt feast (!) with Me in Paradise!"

Fairview Park, Ohio

BERTWIN L. FREY

## GOOD FRIDAY

JOHN 19:17-30

(Fifteen hundred years ago Bishop Ambrose of Milan ascended his pulpit and said: "I find it impossible to speak to you today. The events of Good Friday are too great for human words. Why should I speak while my Savior is silent and dies?" He could not do justice to the event. Neither can we, and yet we must preach on this theme, for it is the heart of the Gospel message of God's love and man's salvation.)

A year ago the most infamous Nebraskan of the last decade, Charles Starkweather, was scheduled to die on Good Friday. He was reported to have killed 11 people during his "mad dash to freedom." While the killer was still loose and body after body was being found, doors and windows were locked, guns and weapons were tested, and sleep was light and fitful among the people living on the great plains. The killer was tried and sentenced to death. However, Charles Starkweather didn't die on Good Friday. He was granted another reprieve because 1930 years ago, on another terror-filled Friday, Christ died. Without regard for due process of law, men basing their actions not on justice but on personal hate, vengeance, pride, and prejudice,

### They Crucified Him

#### I. *They*

A. The chief priests (v. 21; Matt. 26:59—chief priests, elders, council). The spiritual leaders of Israel crucified Him. When the 11 top Communists were tried, Judge Harold Medina sought to give them a fair, honest, and unbiased trial. Involved in the trial were nine months of time, 50 witnesses, 761 exhibits, 5 million words, and 21,157

pages of testimony. The total cost was one and a quarter million dollars spent on these avowed enemies of the United States. Jesus' trial was "history's most infamous trial." Among illegal and unlawful actions committed were beginning the trial at night; holding court on Friday (day before the Sabbath) and before a high festival (Passover); denying the benefit of favorable witnesses; conducting a trial and pronouncing sentence of capital punishment on the same day; calling known false witnesses; condemning the accused before trial, etc. And still they crucified Him.

B. The soldiers carried out the crucifixion (vv. 23, 24). The earthly possessions of the condemned were divided among them. They crucified Him as they were commanded by Pontius Pilate, but the blame lies not only on the chief priests and elders, on Pilate, and on the soldiers.

C. We crucified Him. Our sins, too, sent Him to death. Our guilt helped hammer the nails. The iniquities of the inhabitants not only of Jerusalem but of every Jerusalem today—of New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Omaha—caused His death by crucifixion. All people had a hand in the scourging, torture, and crucifixion. His blood is also on us. He took our sins with their deadly curse, their painful punishment, and bore them in His own holy body. Christ died for us. (Isaiah 53, Epistle)

## II. *Crucified*

A. They crucified Him on Golgotha, the place of the skull (v. 17). At grim and gory Golgotha we realize the crushing power of sin. The terrifying weight of transgressions was so heavy that God paid the highest price in all human history, the death of His own Son. What an ugly mountain of sin was heaped on Golgotha! Yet only on Calvary does the Savior's love and mercy completely overshadow and cover that ugly mountain of sin. From Calvary shines forth the full

brightness of God's love. On Calvary sin was vanquished. The bonds of iniquity were broken. Complete forgiveness and final victory were won. On Golgotha Satan's skull was crushed. They crucified Him on Golgotha, but He won the great battle.

B. He died willingly when they crucified Him. He died for you. Is your heart heavy with hatred, with strife and selfishness, with spite and jealousy, with pride and envy? Stand beneath the cross. Fall on your knees, and ask forgiveness. Look up to Him who was crucified. Accept this marvelous truth, He died for me! Your sins against neighbor, family, self, conscience; your sins of soul, mind, and body; your sins of hands, hearts, and lips—all are forgiven. On Calvary, "heaven's highest Love" took your place, and He removed your sins from you. They crucified Him, but He died for you.

## III. *Him*

A. When they crucified Him, they crucified God. Above Him was the title "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews" (vv. 19-22). When they took Him captive, and He replied, "I am He," they fell back helpless to the ground. Though crucified between the two thieves, naked and terribly alone, mocked and ridiculed, He who died was the Christ, the promised Messiah, the King of the Jews. "Let these go!" was His command in Gethsemane. "Let these go!" is His command in every hour to sin, death, devil, and hell. And they obey, for He is God, the Almighty, the King of kings.

B. He finished His redemptive work (v. 30). The cross, an adornment for us, was an accursed tree, stained with His lifeblood. Crucifixion was a most inhuman means of execution, designed to make death as painful and as lingering as possible. Finally the agonizing hours came to an end. The price was met. He walked the last mile, suffered the final agony, and then cried out, "It is

finished." You need nothing more than Him for your redemption.

Cling to Him. He beseeches you, "Come unto Me." He assures you, "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out." Come, receive forgiveness for your sins, comfort for sorrows, strength for weakness, light for a darkened pathway, and hope for all tomorrows. Accept His invitation for pardon here and Paradise hereafter. Amen.

Omaha, Nebr. ELMER E. MUELLER

### THE FEAST OF THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD

MATT. 28:1-10

(Easter itself can be a pitfall for the preacher. The temptation to scold about church attendance and Easter finery is no small one. The preacher would do well to avoid this completely and stick to the great proclamation. Another pitfall of Easter preaching is the attempt to marshal rational proofs for the resurrection. The Easter texts offer none. But the New Testament is freighted with evidence and signs that God did raise Jesus from the dead. Someone has said they are the "craters left by the explosion" of the resurrection. These are discerned by the gift of faith, and they are decisive to the Christian faith and witness.)

The Gospel changes people. This is obvious in the disciples of our Lord as they appeared after the resurrection in contrast to their behavior before. Why? Because the resurrection was decisive. It should be so for us. Let us re-examine how

#### The Resurrection of Our Lord Cheers Us and Compels Us to Action

1. *The news of the resurrection of our Lord is cheering news that God has performed salvation for His people*

A. God gives witness to salvation by a dramatic sign in the cosmos. (1) An earthquake is a sign of terror to the unbelieving. Guards are terrified by the earthquake and the signs of the Holy One (vv. 1-4). These

signs create terror, anxiety, fear of death. Really fear of God's wrath. So it is in the old order, under sin and death. (2) An earthquake is a sign of redemption to the believing. Jesus had enumerated earthquakes among the cosmic signs of the last days (Luke 21, Matt. 24). Last days are to hold no terror for the believer. The believer is to take comfort that God has accomplished salvation for His people (Luke 21:28). God has radically changed the old order. We are to take comfort. We live in the new aeon. Nothing should hold terror for us. God has provided salvation in the risen Christ.

B. God gives witness to salvation through a Word. (1) The empty tomb in itself is not convincing testimony. Guards and officials are entrenched in their unbelief (vv. 11-15). The women expected something different (v. 5). Mary Magdalene not convinced by the empty tomb (John 20:5). Our doubts, too. Natural and normal. (2) The Word contains the revelation that God raised His Son. At the tomb (vv. 5, 6): "As He said." (V. 7): "I have told you." This is revelation from God. The tomb becomes a sign through the Word. Thus we also recognize and discern the risen Christ in Word and Sacrament.

C. God gives witness of salvation in the resurrection appearances. (1) The mode of the appearances is not clear. Apparently not to unbelievers. Appears to be some change. Difficult to recognize. Yet discernible in His Word (vv. 9, 10; Luke 24; John 20). Our ability to discern the Christ by the same Word. (2) The purpose of the appearances is clear. To dispel fear (v. 10). Fear which grows out of our sin and guilt. Fear of punishment of death. To give assurance. "My brethren." The adoption of sons. To proclaim victory. To share life with God. "They shall see Me" (John 14). Paul's use of appearances in 1 Cor. 15. This peace is ours.

II. *The news of the resurrection of our Lord is news that compels us to share this Gospel with others*

A. Those who discern the resurrection of our Lord must tell others. (1) The command is given. V. 7: "Go quickly and tell." V. 10: "Go tell My brethren." No options. (2) The world needs this Word of hope. Imagine the despair of the brethren. Not only for our Lord. For themselves. Hopes crushed. So many faiths and hopes go begging for a word of victory from the grave. Here it is. Share it.

B. Those who discern the resurrection of our Lord will tell others gladly. (1) This is no ordinary hope for a future life. This is not Socratic or Platonic. Not the story of a "beautiful death." Think of our funeral parlor talk. Not a wishful dream of immortality. This is the resurrection. Our hope (Rom. 10:9). He has become the First Fruits of them that sleep. (1 Cor. 15:19, 20). Also contains hope for final consummation. The risen Christ comes again (v. 20). (2) This is no ordinary hope for the present. Life comes by death. Women witnessed the price for the empty tomb—Calvary. We come by this new life by Baptism (Rom. 6). Thus we must daily die to sin. But in Christ we rise to newness of life.

The resurrection Gospel is the story of radical change. God has reversed the old order that we might live in the new.

He is risen! Let us take heart. Let us go quickly and tell.

Palos Park, Ill.

HARRY N. HUXHOLD

QUASIMODOGENITI

JOHN 21:1-14

We read in the papers that politicians like to have "breakfasts." During these "breakfasts" important discussions sometimes take place, and notable figures confer.

Imagine having breakfast with Jesus. After the resurrection the disciples enjoyed such a breakfast. Important discussions took place, and certainly notable persons conferred—our Lord and the apostles. Breakfast is a good time to review and verify the events of a previous evening. Our Lord used this breakfast as one of a number of occasions and "appearances" to corroborate His recent resurrection. Breakfast is also a good time to plan the coming day's work. Jesus used this breakfast to help prepare the disciples for their work in the immediate future. What Jesus wanted to teach the disciples we also need to learn. We therefore do well this morning to join in spirit our Lord and His followers in this

Breakfast with Jesus

I. *Jesus wants to make His disciples sure of the resurrection*

A. Jesus wants to make His disciples sure of the resurrection (vv. 1, 14). The Eleven were slow to believe (Matt. 28:17). The terrible Good Friday experiences were not yet forgotten. The Holy Spirit had not yet been fully poured out on them. There were doubts. Cf. today's Gospel, John 20:19-31, the incredulity of Thomas. Jesus made many post-resurrection appearances. (Cf. 1 Cor. 15)

B. The disciples had returned to their accustomed trade (v. 3). They acted as if the cross had been the end of the Lord's potential Messiahship. They were returning to their occupations as fishermen. For all the power of the message of Lent and Easter we act the same way. We are slow to believe and are settling into the same rut we were in before Ash Wednesday, before the great news of Christ's redemption was again vividly portrayed for us.

C. The Lord shows the futility of returning to old ways without recognizing the meaning of His death on the cross and the resurrection (v. 3). The attempt to return to the fisherman's trade was a fiasco. The

fishing was fruitless. Just as futile is our life if we are not "baptized into His death" and, "as Christ was raised from the dead," walking in "newness of life." (Rom. 6:3,4 RSV)

D. Jesus convinced His disciples in a loving and tender way (vv. 6, 7, 12). He performed a miracle and produced a great draught of fish. He invited them to breakfast on the beach. Doubts were erased (vv. 7, 12). Similarly He operates among us with the tenderness of His Word and the miracle of the Sacrament of His body and blood.

E. The renewed recognition of the living Christ produces enthusiasm for the Lord (v. 7). Impetuous Peter leads the way. The post-Easter season is a time for high level enthusiasm, not a returning to old ways. Cf. the American Lutheran Publicity Bureau's "Easter to Pentecost Church Attendance Crusade."

## II. *Jesus wants to prepare His disciples for their work*

A. Jesus wants to prepare His disciples for their work (John 21:15-19). The catch of fish could remind them of their appointed

task as "fishers of men" (Matt. 4:19). The narrative which follows the text is part of the account of this breakfast and is an important discussion of the disciples' future work.

B. Our chief duty in the church is the same as the work of the original disciples. We are to feed His sheep and lambs. We are to be "fishers of men." We are to show the living Christ to men.

C. The great catch of fish might direct us to the returns that can be expected from carrying out the Lord's appointed work (vv. 8, 11). We can at times toil all night and end up with nothing. But when the miracle of the Spirit works through the Word there is a harvest. Parallel: Is. 55:10, 11. This breakfast was one of Jesus' last intimate contacts with His earthly followers, but He left a promise: Matt. 28:20.

Apply the two purposes of Jesus' breakfast with His disciples to our lives in this post-Easter season. We need this instruction just as desperately.

Delmar, N. Y.

HAROLD W. SCHEIBERT



## THEOLOGICAL OBSERVER

### HISTORY AND THE FREQUENCY OF COMMUNION RECEPTION

In the *Lutheran Quarterly* (November 1959) Dr. T. G. Tappert, under the given heading, publishes a helpful overview of the history of Communion attendance in the Christian Church. In the early church there was weekly (Acts 20:7) and perhaps even daily (Acts 2:46) observance of the Lord's Supper, though it is not clear whether "breaking bread" always refers to the Eucharist. There is evidence that this custom continued into the second and third centuries. The *Didache*, dating from about the middle of the second century, exhorts Christians: "On every Lord's Day . . . come together and break bread and give thanks." By the fourth century the frequency of Communion declined sharply. Augustine reports that by his time the frequency of both public observance and individual reception was "different in different places and countries." To arrest the tendency on the part of the people to avoid Communion altogether the Council of Agde (A. D. 506) required that people should commune at least three times a year: at Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost. By 1215 the Fourth Lateran Council made "once a year," namely, at Easter, mandatory as the minimum requirement of Communion reception. Following Luther's suggestion, various church orders recommended Communion attendance "about four times a year," or "at least four times a year," while others advised it "at least once or twice a year." To this day reception of Communion four times a year remains the custom among more churchly people in some Lutheran congregations in Europe. However, the average among European churchgoing Lutherans is more nearly twice a year, while more than half of the nominal Lutherans in Europe do

not commune at all. The record of Lutherans in North America certainly equals and probably exceeds that of their churchgoing brethren abroad.

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

### THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY

*Religion in Life* (Winter, 1959—60), under this heading, offers a symposium on the doctrine of the Holy Trinity in which it considers this basic tenet of the Christian faith from six different points of view. Cyril C. Richardson of Union Theological Seminary thinks that the Trinitarian pattern speaks inadequately of God in view of His "absolute-related nature." Claude Welch of the Yale University Divinity School defends the Trinitarian formula, though he seems to come quite close to modalism. But he rightly concludes that "every formulation of this truth [the Trinity] is transcended by the mystery here expressed." The four other articles scan the dogma from other weighty points of view. The symposium is prefaced by an "Editorial," written by Prof. T. A. Kantonen of Hamma Divinity School, which points out a number of essentials that one must keep in mind in connection with the Trinitarian teaching. He thus writes: "While one may be in danger of losing his soul by denying it [the Trinity], he is in danger of losing his wits in trying to understand it." Again: "Fortunately salvation does not depend upon the ability to understand a doctrine which a theologian can describe only as 'essential paradox.' Yet all the writers agree with Dr. Richardson that 'we are here dealing not with a mere intellectual abstraction, but with the very foundations of Christian piety.'" Or: "The doctrine of the Trinity is the whole gospel in epitome. As Barth insists, it is the Church's answer to the life-and-death question of the genuine-

ness of God's revelation in Christ. Thought forms have changed, but faith in Jesus Christ as 'very God of very God,' whose abiding presence is made real through the Holy Spirit, is as essential to the Church today as [it was] to the Nicene Fathers."

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

#### BRIEF ITEMS FROM THE NATIONAL LUTHERAN COUNCIL

*Chicago.*—Representatives of four uniting Lutheran bodies agreed here to name their proposed denomination the "Lutheran Evangelical Church in America."

The name was chosen by the Joint Commission on Lutheran Unity, which also approved June 1962 as the tentative target date for establishment of the new church of more than three million members.

In reference to the chosen name the nomenclature committee's report pointed out that "the order of the words provides a different 'twist' in the usual processional of words in a Lutheran Church body name." Therefore it added, "Little legal difficulty should be encountered in its use."

The committee further stressed the ecumenical character of the approved name. "We are a part of the larger Evangelical Church of the Christian world, but still a part," it said. "We are a *Lutheran* part of the Evangelical Church.

"By this name we are emphasizing our partnership in the greater Church rather than putting the emphasis upon one part of the Church. Such emphasis would recognize our place as being a part of, but not the whole, of the Church in the world which treasures evangelical truth."

The committee also noted that "the words 'Lutheran' and 'Evangelical,' seemingly desired by the majority of the membership of our Churches, are both found here."

Selection of a name for the proposed new church had been held in abeyance by the JCLU because its legal counsel had advised against the choice of a title "deceptively

similar" to that of any other body. The 16 existing Lutheran denominations in America have already employed most possible juxtapositions of the words *American*, *Lutheran*, and *Evangelical*.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church is the name of the body that will merge next year with the American Lutheran Church and the United Evangelical Lutheran Church. After 10 years of negotiations they will form "The American Lutheran Church" at Minneapolis next April 22—24.

Consummation of the two mergers will reduce the number of Lutheran bodies from 16 to 11. The "Lutheran Evangelical Church in America," with 3,000,000 members, will be the largest, followed by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, with 2,315,000 and The American Lutheran Church, with 2,250,000.

*Chicago.*—A study of the future setup of theological seminaries in the new Lutheran Evangelical Church in America was authorized here by representatives of the four church bodies expected to enter the merger.

Preparation of the blueprint for theological education was voted by the Joint Commission on Lutheran Unity for the United, Augustana, Finnish Evangelical, and American Evangelical Lutheran Churches.

The commission instructed its committee on seminaries, headed by Dr. P. O. Bersell, president emeritus of the Augustana Church, to report at the next meeting of JCLU. It will be held in New York Feb. 18—20.

The committee was asked to draw up "a provisional table of alignment of synods and theological seminaries to be in effect during the first biennium of the new Church."

The committee was also requested to prepare "a projection for the future of the number and location of the theological seminaries of the new Church." The analysis will be presented to the constituting convention of the LECA, tentatively set for June 1962, and then will be referred to the Board of Theological Education. The board is to construct

a master plan for the future of seminaries in the new church.

Dr. Bersell told the commissioners that "the Church should exercise the greatest possible control of seminaries, both as to distribution and location."

"As goes the seminary, so goes the Church," he said.

After approval of the study by the JCLU, Augustana withdrew its earlier request that the commission adopt the principle of a maximum of five theological seminaries in the new Church.

The ULCA has 10 seminaries and the other three bodies one each. The 13 schools, it was reported, have 1,132 undergraduates and 119 faculty members. Their combined properties are valued at \$8,000,000 and their endowments total \$3,695,000. Contributions received from the churches, synods, and individuals amount to more than \$850,000 annually.

On the issue of theological education there was approved last year by the JCLU a compromise agreement under which supervision of the seminaries will be shared by the central body and the synods.

As now proposed, responsibility for ownership and administration of seminaries is placed with the synods, as is now the case in the ULCA. However, broad powers and duties are vested in the Board of Theological Education of the new Church.

The board is to recommend the location of seminaries, establish curricular standards, provide certain financial support, sponsor scholarships, counsel in the selection of teaching personnel, nominate some members of governing boards, and encourage postgraduate and other specialized studies.

*Chicago.*—*The Lutheran* has been selected as the name for the periodical of the new church body to be known as the Lutheran Evangelical Church in America.

The name of the church paper was voted here by the Joint Commission on Lutheran

Unity, which represents the United, Augustana, Finnish Evangelical, and American Evangelical Lutheran Churches.

*The Lutheran* is the name of the ULCA's weekly magazine. With more than 200,000 subscribers, it is said to have the largest circulation of any Protestant weekly in America.

*Chicago.*—Leaders of districts in the thirty synods that are expected to compose the new Lutheran Evangelical Church in America will be known as "deans."

Preference for the term "dean" rather than president to describe the presiding officer of the district was expressed here by the Joint Commission on Lutheran Unity.

Under the proposed constitution for synods in the new Church, districts to be established in each synod will contain between 20 and 40 congregations.

The leader of the new Church and the top officials of its proposed 30 synods will be known as "president."

*Chicago.*—Membership of the proposed Lutheran Evangelical Church in America in four ecumenical national and international organizations was recommended here by the Joint Commission on Lutheran Unity.

They are the World Council of Churches, Lutheran World Federation, National Council of Churches, and National Lutheran Council.

The commission represents the four Lutheran bodies who are uniting to form the 3,000,000-member Lutheran Evangelical Church. These are the American Evangelical Lutheran Church, Augustana Lutheran Church, Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church (Suomi Synod), and United Lutheran Church in America.

Three of the four, the American Evangelical, Augustana, and United are now members of the four interdenominational organizations. The Suomi Synod belongs only to the NLC and the LWF.

In other actions the 46-member commis-

sion approved a revised preamble to the new organization's constitution. It reads:

"We, members of the Church of Christ, desiring to be blessed together with Word and Sacrament and to unite in the common confession, defense and propagation of our faith in Jesus Christ our Saviour, do hereby adopt this constitution and solemnly pledge ourselves to be governed by its provisions."

The commissioners also agreed on a constitutional language for provisions governing baptized, confirmed, and communing membership.

Child members in the merged church are defined as those who have been baptized and are a part of the family of the congregation, but who have not yet been confirmed.

Adult or confirmed members will be those who have been duly received into communicant membership of the congregation by adult Baptism, confirmation, certificate of transfer from another Lutheran congregation, or reaffirmation of faith.

Four merger documents are expected to receive their final approval by the commission at its next meeting in New York Feb. 18—20. These are the new church's constitution and bylaws, a synod constitution, and a model constitution for local congregations.

A tentative timetable calls for the four Lutheran groups to act on adoption of the union plans by August 1961 and to hold their final conventions and the merged church's constituting convention by June 30, 1962.

*Stockholm.*—Press organs in this country have reacted negatively to a proposed change in law that would deprive the Church of Sweden Assembly of its veto power over state legislation involving the affairs of that church.

The proposal has been approved by an official commission which is making a long-range study of the national constitution and which is expected to bring in a recommended revision in 1961 or 1962.

To this advocated change several papers have applied a statement that the head of the church, Archbishop Gunnar Hultgren, made in a book two years ago: "An increased dependence on the state would be of such fatal consequences that it must outweigh all the drawbacks connected with a separation between state and church."

*Vatican City.*—Helping backward countries to develop their natural resources, and not artificial birth control, is the way to solve the problem of overpopulation, Pope John XXIII declared in a secret consistory.

He clearly linked artificial birth control to the "problem of hunger," declaring that "to remedy this terrible calamity of hunger, one cannot in any way have recourse to erroneous doctrines and to the damaging and death-bearing methods of birth control."

"Instead," the Pope continued, "it is necessary that the riches of the earth be placed at the disposal of all, as God's commandment and justice demand. Let earthly goods be better distributed, let the barriers of egoism and self-interest be broken down. Let the best method be studied for helping the underdeveloped areas. Let men work to obtain from the earth itself the incalculable resources still hidden, which it can offer for the advantage of all."

*Geneva.*—Under the leadership of Bishop Wladislaw Fierla, head of the Polish Lutheran Church in Exile, the church's four congregations in Great Britain have asked the Lutheran World Federation to stop giving them subsidies, Director Bengt Hoffman of the LWF Department of World Service revealed here.

The step resulted from "a decision of the conscience, prompted by longfelt and often-expressed doctrinal consideration," said Bishop Fierla in a letter of notification to the Rev. William B. Schaeffer, LWF/WS senior representative in London.

In the past the Poles have sometimes disagreed doctrinally with the other Lutheran

refugee and immigrant groups which the federation assists in Great Britain, in the direction of the distinctive teaching of The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod.

The LWF subsidies in recent years have amounted to about 2,300 pounds (\$6,440) annually — roughly half the Poles' congregational and synodical expenses, including pastors' salaries. Bishop Fierla requested that these subsidies be discontinued as of Dec. 31, 1959.

In their place the Polish congregations will receive financial aid from the Missouri Synod starting in January 1960, Bishop Fierla told the Lutheran Council of Great Britain at a meeting in December.

He expressed hope that the Poles might be able to continue as members of the council, of which he was once the executive secretary. Because the action of their congregations was stated to be due to doctrinal differences with the other affiliated Lutheran groups, council leaders are now considering how this affects the Poles' relations with the organization itself.

The Lutheran Council is the joint agency of the various groups for a number of mutual interests and activities. It was originally set up in 1948 to be the common channel for the aid of both the LWF and the Missouri Synod to these groups of Continental origin: Germans, Latvians, Estonians, Lithuanians, and Poles.

In 1955 the Missouri Synod withdrew from the arrangement and continued assisting only its affiliated Evangelical Lutheran Church of England. The ELCE itself dropped out of the council in 1957, when the latter decided to seek a more official relationship with the LWF.

Bishop Fierla told the council that the Polish congregations have no intention to join the ELCE, which reports 775 members as compared with their 950.

In his letter to Pastor Schaeffer the Polish churchman expressed "deep gratitude for all

the generous assistance you have given us for more than 10 years."

"Your help enabled us to carry on the work of our church in the difficult circumstances of life in exile," he said. "We trust that our decision will not alter the friendly relationship which exists between our church and the Lutheran World Federation."

He added the hope that there would be "further doctrinal discussion and consultation in inter-Lutheran affairs here in Great Britain in the hope of reaching unity in doctrine and practice."

When the Polish Church in Exile held its third synod in London last May, it sent "fraternal greetings" to the LWF assuring it of "our unity with the Evangelical faith, based on the Holy Bible and our (confessional writings)," and thanking the federation for its "constant help and co-operation."

*Oslo.* — Christians who argue that the Gospel of Christ should not be preached to Jews with the aim of conversion are not "faithful to the Lord of the Church and its mission," a veteran Norwegian missionary to Jews says in a statement published here.

The Rev. Magne Solheim of Haifa, who has worked among Jews and Jewish converts for the past 21 years — in Israel for the past 10 — deplored the outspoken opposition of "many," including theologians, to this kind of evangelistic work.

He quoted the words of a Christian of Jewish race who said: "Satan uses many servants and many methods to hinder us from seeing that Jesus is our Messiah and Savior. In our times he is even closing the eyes of Christians . . . to prevent the salvation of the Jews."

From among such opponents of missions to Jews Pastor Solheim singled out Prof. Reinhold Niebuhr of Union Theological Seminary, New York, and a Dutch theologian whom he did not name. Dr. Niebuhr recently expressed the view that the Jews could better be helped to a closer relationship with God

within the framework of their own religion than by efforts to win them to the Christian faith.

The vigorous contrary opinion of the 49-year-old leader of the Norwegian Israel Mission was published here by the weekly religious news service *Kristelig Pressekontor* after a vacation visit by Pastor Solheim to his homeland.

He also rejected a view expressed by some Christians "that missions (to Jews) are unnecessary because the Jews will be converted by God's own direct action at the return of Christ."

Pointing out that in New Testament times Jews embraced the Christian faith as a result of preaching, Pastor Solheim declared: "For Jews today the way is the same. We must be faithful to the Lord of the church and the church's mission. . . . We must be true to the missionary command with respect to Israel too."

He said that Dr. Niebuhr's expressed opinion against evangelistic work among Jews "has been widely spread in Israel and throughout the world" and has been "harmful" to his mission.

By and large, however, "Jews today have no hostile attitude toward Jesus," Pastor Solheim stated.

Although "a Jew who becomes a Christian is (still) regarded as a traitor to his own people," nevertheless "there are many enlightened Jews who understand that if the church is to be true to the Gospel, it must proclaim that Gospel also to the Jews."

They respect Christians most when they do not "hide their Christian faith in their relations with Jews," he said. "It is tremendously shortsighted if we Christians believe that the church will gain favor in Jewish eyes by ignoring the Christian message."

Pastor Solheim's congregation at Haifa is

made up of Christians of Jewish blood from Europe—chiefly from Rumania, and in smaller numbers, from Hungary, Germany, and Yugoslavia. Some were baptized believers before they left Europe, others were converted after resettling in Israel.

After preaching the Gospel to such people in Rumania and Hungary since 1938, he was obliged by the Rumanian government to leave in 1949. The mission which was founded in Israel under his leadership in that year now has a staff of seven Norwegian missionaries.

Pastor Solheim is also the United Bible Society's agent in Israel. During the nine years the agency has been in his charge, it has sold 130,000 copies of the Scriptures in some 40 languages.

He recently reported that the Bible, including the New Testament, is read more than any other book in Israel. Israelis' eagerness to read the whole Bible, he said, is part of their generally expressed interest in Christian literature, history, and culture.

However, Protestants of Jewish background—whom Pastor Solheim calls Hebrew Christians—find themselves in a peculiar situation in Israel, since they have no recognized "nationality."

Israel's effort to be at the same time both a religious community and a democratic state, he says, has led to a still-unfinished debate over the definition of a "Jew"—whether the term fixes nationality, religion, or birth-right.

Meanwhile, although the government has granted to all citizens the right of civil burial, only religious laws are recognized for marriage and divorce. Since only the Jewish, Muslim, Roman Catholic, and Orthodox faiths are officially recognized religious communities, other Christian groups, including Lutherans, face a problem of legal status for their marriages.



## BOOK REVIEW

*All books reviewed in this periodical may be procured from or through Concordia Publishing House, 3558 South Jefferson Avenue, St. Louis 18, Missouri.*

**THE NATURE AND AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE.** By Raymond Abba. Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1958. 333 pages. Cloth. \$4.50.

Explaining the background of this book, the author mentions the change of emphasis in recent years in Biblical studies. He sees a new attitude which seeks to transcend the earlier work of Biblical criticism by constructive theological exposition. While recognizing the human element in the Bible, the present emphasis, he believes, is on the significance of the Bible as the living and abiding Word of God. But he regards the Bible as authoritative merely inasmuch as it is the primary witness to the events related in it. Nearly three pages of acknowledgments to publishers and others for permission to use extracts from copyright publications point up the significance of this volume as a review of contemporary thought on the nature and authority of the Bible.

L. W. SPITZ

**KLEINE SCHRIFTEN.** By Hans Lietzmann, ed. by Kurt Aland. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1958. Vol. I, x and 487 pages, paper, DM 43.—. Vol. II, x and 303 pages. Paper. DM 26.—.

These two volumes are part of a three-volume anthology of Hans Lietzmann's theological writings, edited by Kurt Aland. Lietzmann emphasized the importance of recovering as fully and accurately as possible the historical matrix in which the literature of the New Testament developed, as a preliminary to sound exegesis. It is fitting therefore that the first volume of this anthology begins with a series of studies on

the world in which Christianity was born and in which it grew to adulthood. The articles include discussions of Virgil's fourth eclogue, focusing on the world redeemer motif; gnosis and magic; Peter as a Roman martyr; church government in the early centuries; Constantine's politically conditioned Christianity; Jerome and Chrysostom; the text of the Jena Irenaeus-Papyrus; and a brief history of early Christian art. The second volume is a bit slimmer, but will be prized especially by the student of the New Testament text. The first two essays express the intimate relationship between sound scientific Biblical exegesis and homiletical appropriation, between the pastor's study and his pulpit. In the opening article, "Der Theolog und das Neue Testament," Lietzmann answers with a vehement "no" the question: Is not the modern student of the Word dispensed from doing his own philological work, since we have good Bible translations and commentaries? The theological controversies and debates of our time, Lietzmann points out, suggest that the "authorities" do not have all the answers and that a return to the Scriptures must be made by everyone who would communicate its message. Since the interpreter's environment is always a fresh one, he cannot escape the responsibility of a fresh translation or interpretation of old texts to a modern age. But to do this, he must go back to the original.

The second portion of the second volume is devoted to the history of the New Testament text and to textual criticism. The five essays on the history of the New Testament



canon are a classical discussion of this problem, and a model of unencumbered clarity. In an article entitled "Schallanalyse und Textkritik" Lietzmann describes the trick he played on Sievers and Schantze, who attempted to detect interpolations in the New Testament on the basis of alleged variations in tone and rhythm. Lietzmann took an unedited text of a life of Dalmatos and interpolated it with bits of text from various church fathers, lives of the martyrs and even some twentieth-century material. He replies with devastating aplomb to Sievers' and Schantze's agonized cry of "Foul!"

In a section devoted to historical matters in the New Testament, one article demonstrates (against Bultmann) that the story of Jesus' trial is basically true to history.

Most of these articles, which first appeared in various learned journals, are otherwise unavailable to the average student, but in these volumes he has at hand a low-priced education in New Testament studies.

FREDERICK W. DANKER

**EARLIEST CHRISTIANITY: A HISTORY OF THE PERIOD A. D. 30—150.**

By Johannes Weiss, translated and edited by Frederick C. Grant. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959. xxx and 870 pages in 2 volumes. Paper. \$4.20 the set.

Johannes Weiss, who died in 1914, was one of the most influential New Testament theologians of the early twentieth century. Like Albert Schweitzer, he helped to popularize the idea of consistent (*konsequente*) eschatology. His masterwork *Das Urchristentum*, published in 1917, was translated into English in 1937, even though Weiss did not live to finish the work. This Harper Torchbook edition is a reprint with a new introduction and bibliography. Weiss set himself the task of reconstructing critically the history of the early church from a non-Pauline viewpoint. Because of the author's

wide influence this reprint will be welcomed even by those who cannot accept his reconstruction.

EDGAR KRENTZ

**IT IS PAUL WHO WRITES.** By Ronald Knox and Ronald Cox. New York: Sheed and Ward, 1959. x and 487 pages. Cloth. \$4.50.

This book is a sequel to the author's *Gospel Story* (New York, 1958). The text of Ronald Knox's translation of all the Pauline writings appears on the left-hand pages, with the opposite pages carrying a summary paraphrase, which is throughout a model of clarity as well as brevity. On the whole St. Paul's Gospel accents come out quite clearly in both the translation and the commentary.

FREDERICK W. DANKER

**SACRAMENTAL THEOLOGY: A TEXT-BOOK FOR ADVANCED STUDENTS.** By Clarence McAuliffe. Saint Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1958. xxix and 457 pages. Cloth. \$6.00.

We have here, in a book written for university students and seminarians, authentic Roman Catholic doctrinal theology on the sacraments as taught to the future cleric and lay leaders of their church. A seventh of the book deals with the sacraments in general. Over one fourth of the volume treats of the Eucharist and one sixth of penance; approximately equal portions of 25—30 pages are devoted to Baptism, confirmation, order, and extreme unction; 50 pages on matrimony bring the work to a close. Each section contains several conclusions (theses), with comments that refute Protestant errors, adduce patrological proof, magisterial support and Scriptural quotations with exegesis, and provide syllogistic summaries. Scripture is used in a dogmatic and in an apologetic way. The dogmatic use reveals that and how the church has used a certain portion of Scripture. The apologetic use implies that the interpreter, professional exegete, or student has freedom

to use the passages intelligently and reserves the ultimate interpretation to the church if she wishes to make it. For McAuliffe proof from tradition is of equal, sometimes greater value, than proof from Scripture. Yet "in the United States our students come in almost daily contact with Protestants, who allege that Scripture alone is the rule of faith. Accordingly, the student should, especially in this country, become acquainted with proofs from Holy Writ."

Budding, practicing, and tired theologians could well take to heart the introductory advice give here and apply it to their own reading of doctrinal theology: "This book will train you never to discuss any proposition without first understanding accurately its meaning. It will fashion your mind to orderly processes of thought. It will enable you in all branches of learning to distinguish substantial from accidentals. . . . This book will amplify your knowledge of your faith, but it should also increase your appreciation for it. Other [college] courses aim, either solely or primarily, at your mind. This course aims at both your mind and your *heart*. To achieve these co-equal objectives, you must study, reflect, and *pray*." This is a masterful performance by a member of the Society of Jesus, an order which is usually pretty persuasive in setting forth any of its causes.

GILBERT A. THIELE

**CONTEMPORARY EVANGELICAL THOUGHT.** Edited by Carl F. Henry. Great Neck, New York: Channel Press, c. 1957. 320 pages. Cloth. \$5.00.

This ambitious symposium has a twofold purpose: (1) To trace the course of conservative Protestant theology during the first five decades of this century; and (2) to delineate the present face of post-Fundamentalist conservative Protestantism. The ten participants are themselves among the foremost contributors to the theological renaissance which they describe—Edward J. Young

("The Old Testament"), Everett F. Harrison ("The New Testament"), Roger Nicole ("Theology"), Dirk Jellema ("Ethics"), Gordon H. Clark ("Apologetics"), Frank E. Gaebelien ("Education"), Earle E. Cairns ("Philosophy of History"), Harold Kuhn ("Philosophy of Religion"), the editor ("Science and Religion"), and Andrew W. Blackwood ("Evangelism and Preaching"). The careful reader who is interested in the direction that conservative Protestant theology is taking will find both their assertions and their reticences, like the cleavages and the agreements among them, of great interest. In general, the authors seem to be writing primarily for a like-minded public. As a bibliographical record — generally somewhat uncritical, however — of the theological writers who tended the flame of conservative Protestant scholarship during the dark and drafty decades of the conflict between Modernism and Fundamentalism, this collection of essays has undeniable value. The valiant but unsuccessful attempt to include in the catalog the contribution of "conservative" Lutherans serves only to emphasize the radical chasm between the Lutheran Church and Calvinism and the basic inapplicability of Calvinist criteria to Lutheran confessional theology and its professors.

ARTHUR CARL PIEPKORN

**THE CONCEPT OF GRACE.** By Philip S. Watson. Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1959. 116 pages. Cloth. \$2.00.

The author's scholarly study of Luther's theology in his book *Let God Be God* prepares the reader for these essays on the concept of grace. Anyone interested in Luther's theology cannot escape a concern for the concept of grace. In these essays Watson traces the history of its concept from the days of St. Paul to the present. He calls them essays on the way of divine love in human life. In discussing Luther's concept of grace he directs attention to the Reformer's em-

phasis on the power of the Word of God, in which the incarnate Word Jesus Christ comes to the sinner. The brevity of this little book should not encourage hasty and superficial reading. The subject is one of life or death for the sinner.

L. W. SPITZ

**THE BIBLE ON THE LIFE HEREAFTER.**

By William Hendriksen. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1959. 222 pages. Cloth. \$3.95.

The author of this book, formerly professor of New Testament at Calvin College, has produced an excellent and handy reference book, strongly fortified with Scripture, on a subject of universal and timeless interest. In 50 chapters, which never exceed five pages in length, inclusive of discussion topics, the author discusses individual and general eschatology. The first of these includes 18 chapters on death, immortality, and the intermediate state, while in the second section there are 32 chapters on the signs of the last times, Christ's second coming and other events associated with it, and the final fate of the righteous and of the wicked. The Bible references to each problem are in general carefully and aptly chosen. The Calvinism of the author shines through in connection with Matt. 25:46, where the doom of the wicked is ascribed to their reprobation from eternity. The Table of Contents and the Subject Index are full and clear, offering a ready access to any given problem.

O. E. SOHN

**NEUE ZEITSCHRIFT FÜR SYSTEMATISCHE THEOLOGIE.** Berlin W 35: Verlag Alfred Töpelmann, 1959. DM 36; for students, DM 28.80.

This is to introduce the successor to the former *Zeitschrift für systematische Theologie*. The name for this new venture in theological journalism was chosen in order to suggest the similarity of form and purpose with the former publication. A close connection between the two publications was

also established by the choice of Paul Althaus as one of the two editors. His coeditor is Carl Heinz Ratchow of Münster. The prospect for the reader of this journal is a menu of a varied theological diet—some milk but mostly solid food. There will be 384 pages of it per year. This first number indicates that the editors are alert to the fact that theology is a *habitus practicus* (θεόσδοτος).

L. W. SPITZ

**ALS ER UNS SCHUF.** By Werner Dicke. Berlin: Christlicher Zeitschriftenverlag, n.d. 128 pages. Paper. Price not given.

Though the author does on the whole build gold, silver, and precious stones, extolling the power and goodness and wisdom of God in the creation, and describes the total record of creation from the first line to the last as "Das Hohelied der Allmacht Gottes," he does not hesitate from beginning to end to build wood, hay, and stubble by placing the beginning of the world ten billion years and the creation of man  $4\frac{1}{2}$  billion years into the past. According to Dicke, man was not created as described in Genesis 1 and 2, but, as certain archaeological finds near Lake Victoria in Africa have proved to him, descended some 25 millions of years ago from the so-called primates, which then evolved in two directions, the one type becoming *Homo sapiens* and the other chimpanzees, or anthropoid apes, which, however, are separated from the anthropoids of today by a wide and deep chasm. Then follows this lucid explanation: "For a layman of today it is not easy to find his way through the various finds and discoveries, yet through them, in the words of Karl Heim, there extends a main line which becomes ever more clear, in which we can detect the tracks of the Creator, who according to a definite plan, through thousands of years, prepared the appearance of *Homo sapiens*, the king of creation. We people of today, consequently, believe to have learned that the origin of our being is to be sought

at a time at least 20 millions of years ago." What this assumption does to the simple creation story, the author does not seem to suspect. Were Adam and Eve products of evolution, or of direct divine creation, on the sixth day in the beginning (Gen. 1:1, 26-31; Matt. 19:4)? The Bible record is plain.

O. E. SOHN

**THE STORY OF CHRISTIAN HYMNODY.** By E. E. Ryden. Rock Island, Illinois: Augustana Press, 1959. xvi and 670 pages. Cloth. \$5.95.

**THE SINGING CHURCH.** By Edwin Liebmohr. Columbus, Ohio: The Wartburg Press, 1959. Cloth. vi and 122 pages. \$2.50.

If a contrast were to be made between these two volumes, beyond mere size, it would be that Ryden has treated hymnody more on the basis of the hymn writers, Liebmohr more on the basis of countries and times. Both authors have rendered a useful service by their contributions; they by no means exclude each other. The pastor, the choirmaster, the church organist will profit from each of these volumes for his ministry of music. Ryden's work is a revision and enlargement of his *The Story of Our Hymns* which appeared first in 1930 and received seven editions. It deserves high commendation.

The hymns of Christendom are a common heritage. The earliest church was a singing church. The Middle Ages saw some outstanding hymns composed in Greek and Latin. The Reformation sang its way into the hearts of many people with the hymns of Luther and his co-workers and contemporaries. In spite of the efforts of some of the Reformed theologians, even Calvinism produced some outstanding hymns. When Puritanism's hymnody is contrasted with Pietism's, the latter is seen to have merit. The Lutheran heritage is greater than the Reformed in hymnody, perhaps most evident

among the Scandinavian hymn writers. Brorson, Landstad, Wallin, and Kingo, for instance, should not be crowded out by English or even American hymn writers. The "singing church" must not neglect her treasure.

CARL S. MEYER

**PROTESTANT BEGINNINGS IN JAPAN:**  
*The First Three Decades 1859—1889.*  
By Winburn T. Thomas. Rutland, Vermont: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1959. 258 pages. Paper. \$3.00.

It is most appropriate that the year in which the Centennial of Protestant Missions in Japan was celebrated should see the publication of this volume on the first three decades of Protestant history, with special accent on the heyday progress during the 1880s. Those familiar with the mission history of Japan since World War II will be quick to see a parallel between recent events and the spectacular growth of the '80s, which was retarded in the '90s by resurgent nationalism. The frost of nationalism in the '50s has once again chilled the blossom of the '40s. Winburn Thomas, who first wrote this opus as a doctoral dissertation at Yale under Kenneth Scott Latourette in 1942, came to Japan as missionary in 1933 and is therefore well acquainted with the scene where the action was laid. William Woodward and Frank Cary have helped to bring the work up to date. The copious notes, excellent bibliography, and glossary of Japanese terms add to the usefulness of the text. This is a must for all students of the church in Japan. WILLIAM J. DANKER

**GOD HATH SPOKEN.** By T. Roland Philips. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. 181 pages. \$3.00.

The author of these twenty sermons is a Presbyterian who has served 40 years at the same church in Baltimore. The Foreword by President Edman of Wheaton College, his service for many years as president

of Canadian Keswick, the sturdy, Biblical, outlined, and soberly illustrated style place this preacher among the evangelicals. The victorious life, ranging from the commitment of faith to the application to duty, is the common denominator of the preaching goals of these sermons. The impulse thereto is only occasionally the Savior's atonement; at times it is His second coming or the Bible; although the reader will learn to presuppose the Cross in all of the sermons. The volume is beautifully printed.

RICHARD R. CAEMMERER

**THE ETTA LIBRARY FOR CHRISTIAN EDUCATORS.** 54 pages. 35 cents. **TEACHING TECHNIQUES FOR SUNDAY SCHOOL.** By Clarence H. Benson. Second revision, 93 pages. \$1.25. **VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL.** By Ruth A. Clark. 92 pages. \$1.25. Wheaton, Illinois: Evangelical Teacher Training Association, 1959. Paper.

The *Etta Library for Christian Educators* is a catalog of several hundred Christian education books, periodicals, and other teaching aids. *Teaching Techniques for the Sunday School*, a revision of Benson's *Guide for Pedagogy*, emphasizing content rather than method, reflects the author's competence as pedagog, outlines good teaching procedures and techniques, and is an excellent textbook for teacher-training classes. Ruth Clark's text is a stimulating and comprehensive reference handbook for vacation Bible school workers.

ALBERT G. MERKENS

**CHRISTIANS ALIVE.** By Bryan Green. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1959. 125 pages. \$2.95.

The author is widely known for his book *The Practice of Evangelism* (Scribner's, 1951), and for his evangelistic campaigns in Europe, America, and Australia. He is rector of an Anglican congregation in Birmingham, England, a canon of the cathedral there. As such his thinking is informed

much more amply by the doctrine of the Holy Christian Church than is the case in a great deal of American evangelistic literature. In this little book the author seeks to meet a need when bringing people back into the church, namely, for confronting them with the clear implications of church membership for Christian character and duty. Proceeding from the definition of a man "in Christ," the book discusses concepts like daily Communion; efficiency, understanding, willingness to suffer, gentleness, sharing and creative power, in Christlikeness; and the life of fellowship, discovery, freedom, moral struggle, and humility. The style is non-technical and conversational. In some instances the author's observations are hardly for neophytes in the church, but are reflections from his own experience concerning the church in the world.

RICHARD R. CAEMMERER

**A VISION OF VICTORY.** By Robert L. McCan. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1959. 137 pages. \$3.00.

These sermons read well. The basic interpretation of the Book of Revelation, which they treat, is sensible. The writer is amillennial. Some of the sermons, which is to be expected, involve considerable exegetical detail. In all of them the writer seeks to make a confidence in the Lordship of Christ climactic and central. In some of them the redemption is preached memorably.

RICHARD R. CAEMMERER

**BEST SERMONS.** Vol. VII: 1959—1960 (*Protestant Edition*). Edited by G. Paul Butler. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1959. 304 pages. Cloth. \$3.95.

Once again the religion editor of the *New York Daily Mirror* presents the 42 best sermons which he selected from his reading of more than 7,700 manuscripts submitted. Most of the contemporary pulpit "greats" are represented — Sockman, Weatherhead, Stewart, Kennedy, McCracken, Scherer (they

represent the first six sermons in the volume). A few newer voices also are heard. Three lay sermons are included—by John Foster Dulles, Nathan Pusey, and Irwin Lubbers. Positively one is heartened by Samuel Cavert's foreword, in which he urges a number of criteria for judging effective Biblical preaching. Though there are a few notable exceptions in this volume, it is amazing to see how Protestant preaching is shifting back to the Scriptures. Negatively one wonders whether this book truly represents the "best" Christian preaching in our land. Does the carefully laid annual banquet represent the "best" in the day-in-day-out task of nourishing a nation? The same is true of the ongoing preaching task of the church.

DAVID S. SCHULLER

**ORGANIZED RELIGION AND THE OLDER PERSON.** Edited by Delton L. Scudder. Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1958. 113 pages. Paper. \$2.50.

This volume is a report of the eighth Annual Southern Conference on Gerontology. While former institutes focused on aging and health, economic problems and services, the eight presentations included in the book revolve about the role of religion and religious institutions. Seward Hiltner lays the foundations of "A Theology of Aging." Two presentations consider organized religion's contribution to the Jewish and Protestant aged. Other chapters consider the meaning of religion to the aged from a medical and psychiatric viewpoint. Samuel Blizzard views critically means for expanding the services of the church to the aged. The book is broad in scope—including everything from philosophic presuppositions to detailing of program; some authors attempted to survey all of the research findings pertinent to their area; others described only their own programs. The volume is useful for all churchmen dealing with any sizable number of aged people. It explodes with documentation

a number of old stereotypes and should stimulate a deeper ministry among this group.

DAVID S. SCHULLER

**WE HAVE THIS MINISTRY.** Robert N. Rodenmayer. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959. 126 pages. Cloth. \$2.50.

If ever the quiet of the night finds you feeling discouraged and dejected about your work in the ministry, this deeply spiritual little book will speak to your need. The author presented the material as the Kellogg Lectures at the Episcopal Theological School at Cambridge, Mass., last year. He deals simply with the pastor, the administrator, the preacher, the teacher, and the priest. The sum total is pastoral theology at its best. In talking with the pastor he is humble, but never apologetic. He offers sympathy and understanding without condoning indolence or melancholy. His judgments on the pastoral life are penetrating but given in a radiant Christian hope. The book is a rewarding blend of theology, devotion, social insight, and practical experience—all cast into the frame of a ministry under our Lord to people entrusted to our care.

DAVID S. SCHULLER

**THE AMERICAN HIGH SCHOOL TODAY: A First Report to Interested Citizens.** By James Bryant Conant. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1959. xiii and 140 pages. Paper. \$1.00.

Conant's contributions to American education may easily outweigh his contributions to science or diplomacy. In a short, readable, significant report he describes the characteristics of American education and the comprehensive high school as one of its unique features. He adds recommendations for improving public education. Lutheran educators must know this book. Since, in the words of John Gardner, the comprehensive high school is responsible "for providing good and appropriate education, both academic and vo-



cational, for all young people within a democratic environment which the American people believe serves the principles they cherish," the guides of these young people, too, will want to know about these schools.

CARL S. MEYER

*THE NEW CAMBRIDGE MODERN HISTORY*. Volume II: The Reformation, 1520—1559. Edited by G. R. Elton. Cambridge: University Press, 1958. xvi and 686 pages. Cloth. \$7.50.

Planned, as was the *Cambridge Modern History* a half century and more ago, as a co-operative work by selected scholars, the *New Cambridge Modern History* bids fair to rank with its predecessor. Sir George Clark has planned the present series of fifteen volumes together with an advisory committee. Elton of Cambridge University is the editor of the second volume.

After an introductory chapter of magnificent proportions by the editor, successive chapters deal with economic change, Luther and the German Reformation, the Reformation in the various countries of Europe, the beginnings of the reform movement within the Roman Catholic Church, political events in the age of the Reformation, intellectual currents and academic institutions, even Eastern Europe, where the Ottoman Turks and the Russians held sway, and the New World. The age of the Reformation is regarded as a coherent whole, medieval as well as modern in its make-up. While theological concerns predominated, material and political and social and international concerns loomed large and were conditioned in part by the theological concerns.

The chapters on the Lutheran Reformation will likely interest most Lutherans particularly. E. G. Rupp of Manchester has dealt with Luther most understandingly. From his vast researches in the writings of Luther he has distilled an account of Luther's activities until 1529 that is difficult to match in similar

compass in any language—and Rupp's English, it must be added, is surpassed only by his scholarship. N. K. Andersen of the University of Copenhagen has written the chapter on the Reformation in Scandinavia and the Baltic.

Not all chapters are as easily read as are these two. All of them contribute to a well-rounded, authoritative account of the period. It is not necessary to purchase or to subscribe for the entire set; the present volume can be purchased separately. CARL S. MEYER

*THE REVOLT OF THE NETHERLANDS* (1555—1609). By Pieter Geyl. New York: Barnes & Nobel, Inc., 1958. 310 pages. Cloth. \$6.00.

Motley's classic, *Rise of the Dutch Republic*, told of the conflict between Roman Catholicism, allied with Absolutism, and Protestantism, the champion of liberty. He oversimplified the history of the beginnings of the Dutch people. National, social, economic factors also played into the struggle. The emergence of the state we know as Holland is portrayed by Geyl as a complex movement. His interpretation has found wide acceptance, as is shown by the fact that this is the third printing. After 25 years it is still a standard work. CARL S. MEYER

*250 YEARS . . . CONQUERING FRONTIERS: A History of the Brethren Church*. By Homer A. Kent, Sr. Winoona Lake, Indiana: Brethren Missionary Herald Co., 1958. 233 pages. Cloth. \$3.00.

*FOR BRETHREN ONLY*. By Kermit Eby. Elgin, Illinois: The Brethren Press, 1958. 234 pages. Cloth. \$3.00.

In 1708 in Schwarzenau, Germany, the Täufer, or Tunker, church came into being with the trine immersion of eight persons, among whom was Alexander Mack. By 1719 one group had emigrated to America, fol-



lowed by a second group in 1729. The Ephrata movement, the threefold division in 1881, and the Ashland-Grace controversy (1936-39) are part of the history of the Brethren. Kent belongs to the National Fellowship of the Brethren Churches and admits that he writes from that point of view. Even so, the story he tells is one worth noting as a chapter in the history of the churches in America.

Eby's essays speak of the Brethren and the

Mennonites, of social and philosophical questions. Eby is a man of convictions, even though we cannot share all of them, and of insight into men and institutions; he loves people and writes well. His book makes delightful and thought-compelling reading. He believes, for instance, that "there is no substitute for a religiously orientated family and a church to nurture it" (p.232). The judgments he expresses throughout his book are significant.

CARL S. MEYER

### BOOKS RECEIVED

(The mention of a book in this list acknowledges its receipt and does not preclude further discussion of its contents in the Book Review section)

*For You, Teen-Ager in Love.* By Walter Riess. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1960. 78 pages. Paper. \$1.00.

*The Church's Ministry to Youth in Trouble.* By David Schuller. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959. 35 pages. Paper. 35 cents; 2 or more copies, 31½ cents each.

*We Are Now Catholics (Bekenntnis zur Katholischen Kirche),* ed. Karl Hardt, trans. Norman C. Reeves; introductory essay by Sylvester P. Theisen. Westminster: The Newman Press, 1959. lxvii and 223 pages. Cloth. \$3.95.

*Six Existential Thinkers: Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Jaspers, Marcel, Heidegger, Sartre.* By H. J. Blackham. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959. vii and 173 pages. Paper. \$1.25.

*Hat Luther Paulus entdeckt? Eine Frage zur theologischen Besinnung.* By Hans Pohlmann. Berlin: Verlag Alfred Töpelmann, 1959. 148 pages. Paper. Price not given.

*The Cairo Geniza.* By Paul E. Kahle. 2d ed. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1959. xiv and 370 pages; 10 plates. Cloth. 50/—.

*The Sicilian Vespers: A History of the Mediterranean World in the Later Thirteenth Century.* By Steven Runciman. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1958. xiii and 356 pages. Cloth. \$5.50.

*New Testament Essays: Studies in Memory of Thomas Walter Manson, 1893-1958,* ed. A. J. B. Higgins. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1959. xiv and 327 pages. Cloth. 42/—.

*New Member's Packet with Visitor's Guide.* St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959. \$1.00.

*Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse).* By Wilhelm Hegel; translated and annotated by Gustav Emil Mueller. New York: Philosophical Library, 1959. 287 pages. Cloth. \$6.00.

*The Philosophy of Poetry: The Genius of Lucretius (Extraits de Lucrèce.)* By Henri Bergson; translated and edited by Wade Baskin. New York: Philosophical Library, 1959. 83 pages. Cloth. \$2.75.

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